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THE

ORESTEIAN TRILOGY

AGAMEMNON

CHOËPHOROE

EUMENIDES

1914,63

THE ORESTEIA OF AESCHYLUS

TRANSLATED INTO

ENGLISH PROSE BY

LEWIS CAMPBELL

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

Methuen and Co.

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PREFACE

HAVING already published an *Aeschylus in English Verse* with Messrs. Kegan Paul, Trübner and Co., I should probably not have made the present attempt had it not been demanded from me. But '*Poscimur*,' as Horace found, is a word of power. And it remains so even where, as in this case, neither Muse nor Lyre is called in aid. Being asked, and having time at my disposal, I did not like to refuse. And having 'tried both ways,' I find that each has its own advantage. If Verse comes nearer to the Spirit, Prose generally—though by no means always—keeps closer to the Words; and both forms between them may be said to hammer out some partial approximation to the great original.

A few preliminary pages have been added, that the English reader may be placed at the outset in a better position for appreciating the Poet's main intention.

When not otherwise noted, it may be assumed that

Paley's text has been followed. But Wecklein's text and commentary have been consulted throughout; and some of the emendations which he admits have been adopted. These are referred to in the brief Notes appended to this volume. In some disputed places, where I have departed from my previous rendering, I would not be understood to dogmatize either way. This vacillation is the expression of a doubt.

LEWIS CAMPBELL.

KIRNAN, ST. ANDREWS,
July 16*th*, 1892.

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OUTLINE OF THE ACTION

I. AGAMEMNON

CLYTEMNESTRA has resolved to murder her husband, Agamemnon, in revenge for the death of their daughter Iphigeneia, whom he had sacrificed at the outset of the Trojan expedition. In this design she is aided by Aegisthus, who owes a grudge to the house of Atreus, on account of his father, Thyestes. She has set a watchman to look out for the beacon-fire by which the fall of Troy was to be announced. The fire is seen, and Clytemnestra makes great demonstration of joy. The Elders are doubtful until the Herald appears and announces the arrival of the King. Clytemnestra receives her husband with a dissembling speech, and induces him to enter his palace, like an Eastern conqueror, over a path strewn with purple robes. Cassandra, the daughter of Priam, whom he has brought home with him, then prophesies of his impending fate, and her own. A shriek is heard from within, and while the Elders are hesitating,

Clytemnestra suddenly appears and avows the murder. The Elders remonstrate with her, and lament over the King. Clytemnestra then further declares her secret union with Aegisthus, who at last shows himself, accompanied by his guards. A conflict appears imminent, but Clytemnestra deprecates further violence and the play is ended.

II. CHOËPHOROE

Eight years have elapsed, and Orestes, the son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, who has spent his youth in Phocis, in the neighbourhood of Delphi, now returns with Pylades, commissioned by Apollo to avenge his father. At the same moment, Electra, his sister, has been sent by Clytemnestra with offerings to the grave of Agamemnon, in consequence of a warning dream. She is accompanied by the Trojan captive women, who have been attached to the palace since the return of Agamemnon.

Electra pours the libation. They chant over it, and the recognition of brother and sister follows. Orestes, Electra, and the Chorus then combine in a prolonged invocation to the spirit of Agamemnon, and to the powers of the lower world. Orestes, with his resolution thus confirmed, prepares to act, and the scene changes to before the palace. Orestes, in disguise, with Pylades, knocks at the door. When it is

opened, Clytemnestra comes forth and receives from the supposed stranger the news of her son's death. She utters words of grief, perhaps not altogether feigned, but soon recovers her composure, and gives orders for the entertainment of the 'men from Phocis.' Aegisthus, who is from home, is sent for. He goes in hastily to ascertain the truth of the tidings. Presently his cry is heard, and Clytemnestra is loudly called for. She enters and divines the truth. Whereupon she calls imperiously for a workman's axe. But there is no time to fetch it, for Orestes is discovered with the dead body of Aegisthus beside him. The encounter of son and mother is brief and decisive. She is slain behind the scene.

Orestes re-enters, and in self-defence displays the blood-stained web in which Agamemnon had been overpowered. But presently he is aware of the presence of his mother's Furies. They are as yet invisible to all but him, but they effectually drive him forth. He flies for sanctuary to Delphi.

III. EUMENIDES

Orestes has found his way to the holy place at Delphi, but has been pursued by the Furies, and all but overtaken. On entering the temple, however, his pursuers have fallen asleep. But Clytemnestra's ghost awakens them. Apollo then appears and

chases them forth, having previously assured Orestes of his protection.

After this prelude, the scene is changed to Athens. A long time has intervened, during which the Furies have been hunting their victim. But his cause is now ready for decision. He clings to the image of Athena, and his accusers threaten him in vain. Athena herself comes and hears their accusations and his plea. She institutes the court of Areopagus to try the case. Apollo appears in evidence on Orestes' side. The votes are equal, and Athena gives her casting vote for Orestes, who in the joy of his acquittal promises that the league between Athens and Argos shall be inviolable. The resentment of the Furies at first appears inexorable, and they threaten all manner of evil to the Athenian land. But Athena reasons with them, and they are at last pacified, and induced to take up their abode beneath the Areopagus, not now as the Furies (Erinyes), but as Gentle Powers (Eumenides). A great torchlight procession of the converted Furies and their attendants, the Councillors of the Areopagus, and others, concludes the Trilogy.

INTRODUCTION

'*O dark Erinys, dreadful is thy power.*'—SEVEN AGAINST THEBES.

THE three dramas of which an Aeschylean Trilogy is composed are not to be regarded merely as acts of a single drama; yet neither has any one of them, taken apart, the completeness which belongs to Tragedy in its perfection. In point of fact, they were represented continuously, and probably on the same day. And while other poets appear to have been contented with slight or arbitrary links of connection between the pieces which they brought out for competition, it is manifest that Aeschylus preferred to avail himself of the triple[1] performance to develop the full proportions of one great subject. Of this unique form of dramatic art, the plays here translated afford the only extant specimen. Each of them is so great in itself as frequently to have become the subject of separate treatment.

Editions and translations of the *Agamemnon* as a single play are too numerous to be mentioned here.

[1] *Quadruple*, if the Satyric Drama is included.

The *Choëphoroe* of the late Professor Conington (much more elaborate than his *Agamemnon*) is an admirable example of the scholarly treatment of a difficult and important text,[1] and K. O. Müller's edition of the *Eumenides* may be said to mark an epoch in the higher region of classical interpretation and criticism. More recently it has become usual to take the whole Trilogy together, as in the present volume.[2]

The *Oresteia*, as it is generally called, first appeared at Athens in the year 357 B.C., within three years of the date assigned by tradition to the poet's death in Sicily. More obviously than is the case with most great tragic poems, both the choice of the Fable, and in some points the treatment of it, have reference to the circumstances of the time in which the dramas were produced.

The close alliance between Athens and Argos, cemented by their common jealousy of Sparta, had been concluded four years previously (361 B.C.), and was in full vigour. The building of the long walls between Athens and the Piraeus in 458 B.C. marks a culminating point in Athenian patriotism, and it was

[1] His appointment to the Latin Chair at Oxford may have prevented the continuation of the work.

[2] To treat the *Agamemnon* separately would be like concluding a representation of *Macbeth* with the Banquet Scene.

immediately followed by the Spartan invasion of Phocis, which was at least impending when the *Oresteia* appeared.[1] The vindication of the Argive hero, Orestes, by Athena and her Areopagus, with the assistance of Apollo, God of Delphi, had therefore a special interest for the Athenians at the moment, and was not without national significance.

The tale recalls the glories as well as the horrors of the dimly remembered period when Argos and not Sparta had been the mistress of the Peloponnese ; and Argos had recently asserted herself effectively, at least within the valley of Argolis, by crushing the ancient powers of Mycenae and Tiryns. The extinction of Mycenae took place in 468 B.C., and this fact helps to account for the suppression by Aeschylus even of the name of what in Homer's time was the legendary home of Agamemnon. Sophocles, in this and other respects, reverts to the Epic form of legend, but the boldness of Aeschylus was no doubt excused by the coincidence of his innovation with political exigencies.

In the *Odyssey,* as in later Greek writings, Menelaus

[1] On a matter of internal politics, the *status* of the Areopagus, the poet evidently feels strongly, as was natural in a Salaminian warrior, but authorities are too much divided to enable us to speak with confidence of the phase which the question had assumed at this particular time.

lives and reigns at Sparta ; but in the Oresteian trilogy Sparta as well as Mycenae is throughout ignored, and in the *Agamemnon* the two sons of Atreus are imagined as having jointly ruled in Argos until the time of the expedition to Troy. It is in the palace of the Pelopidae in Argos (not in Mycenae, as in the *Electra* of Sophocles) that the banquet of Thyestes had taken place. It was there (and not in Sparta) that Paris had been entertained, and from thence, not from Gythium, he and Helen had sailed forth. From thence also they had been pursued by the avenging navy, levied and led by the two joint kings, who, from their palace in Argos, as sole centre, are supposed to have dominated Hellas.

But while this alteration of the legend was rendered possible by external circumstances, it had for the poet an interest of a different kind. Under his treatment it is distinctly conducive to dramatic unity and to tragic effect. The city of Argos becomes the metropolis of an imperial realm. The two sons of Atreus, leagued in power and mind, and married to the two daughters of Leda, are supposed there to have reigned and feasted gloriously, while past horrors were forgotten, and the paean that rang forth after the third libation in the crowded banquet-hall was graced by the virgin voice of Iphigeneia. The child Orestes gave the elder sovereign assurance of succession.

But the flight of Helen, and the summons to the war for reclaiming her, had altered the face of things, and Clytemnestra remained the only royal person of full years in the great silent house. The delay at Aulis followed, and the unnatural sacrifice. Helen had passively deserted Menelaus for the love of Paris. But the alienation of Clytemnestra from his brother was a passion of different strain, the revenge of an outraged mother, fierce, irreclaimable, and unquenchable. As she brooded over it in those horror-breathing rooms, the creeping blood-feud of the son of Thyestes found its opportunity, and warmed into full life. Aegisthus secretly returned, combined in a guilty league, and complotted with the Queen. She reserved the act of vengeance for her own right hand, but she relied upon the adulterer's support, and he supplied the weapon.[1]

Those intimately acquainted with the household, the Watchmen and the Elders, although they can have no certain knowledge of what is not avowed, are full of dark uneasiness in anticipating the return of the King. One hope remains to them. As the brothers had gone forth together, they are expected to return together. And the victorious army would surely be faithful to its chief. But this hope is crushed. Agamemnon returns,

[1] See Wecklein's commentary on *Cho.* 1011; also an article by the present writer in the *American Journal of Philology*, i. 4 (1880).

indeed, but unaccompanied, except by the few followers who were with him in his single ship, including Talthybius the herald. The host has been scattered by a tempest; Menelaus, for anything that is known, may be no more.[1] Aegisthus and the band of lawless resolutes who form his bodyguard may therefore feel secure of overmastering the immediate followers of Agamemnon who come with him from Troy. And the Elders, who have remained at home, even those of them whose loyalty is unquestionable, are old and feeble.

To what extent are the Elders firmly loyal? The chorus of a Greek drama are apt to be regarded as homogeneous—the exponents of one spirit. But in Aeschylus this is not so always. The Danaïdes at the end of the *Suppliant Women* are not unanimous, for a voice is heard inclining to Hypermnestra's part; and in the *Seven against Thebes* one half-chorus joins with Antigone, the other with Ismene. The divergence in the *Agamemnon* comes out when the King's two-fold death-shriek has been heard. The vacillation of the old men at this critical moment may be variously explained. The hesitation natural to age may account for much. The feeling, of which many signs had previously been given, that something in the State and

[1] For some hints of the situation developed here see Homer, *Odyssey* iv. 514 f.

palace was unsound, the fear of precipitating by untimely action the revolution which is imagined as almost ripe, may also be reckoned as concurrent motives. The spell under which all lay who had listened to Cassandra might be held responsible for everything; but in Greek tragedy (as will be presently seen), while the supernatural is all-pervading, human motives are always present too. No merely magical effect is ever admitted.

It is to be observed that, while the majority of the council, at least, express themselves as eager to do something, there is a minority of four who, without openly dissenting, act as a drag upon the rest (ll. 1358-1361, and 1366-1369). Nothing could be more natural than that in a Greek council there should be an element of lukewarmness, if not of disloyalty. These speakers are not to be credited with the outspoken reproaches afterwards cast at Clytemnestra, or with the open resistance offered to Aegisthus. It would be an anachronism to treat every utterance of a chorus in Aeschylus as if it were dramatically in keeping; but the points which have been observed may suffice to justify, or at least to make intelligible, certain inequalities of tone on the part of the Elders in the earlier portion of the play, such as the mixture of outward deference with disrespectful hints towards Clytemnestra, and the combination of sincere

regard for Agamemnon with unsparing criticism of his actions.[1]

It is unnecessary to make each individual choreutes a person in the drama; enough to say that the Chorus is weak, timorous, mistrustful; not one in spirit, and therefore incapable of united action, although their leaders, when fired at length by the outrage that has been committed, show some sparks of affection and loyal indignation.

The Watchman, like the Chorus-leader, is deeply loyal to Agamemnon, but full of uneasiness and fear of Clytemnestra, of whose will he is the unquestioning instrument. Agamemnon and Aegisthus are both prominent figures, but the poet has not spent on either of them the power of characterisation which is so manifest in the person of Clytemnestra. It may be said, however, without paradox, that the absence of dramatic colouring has in both cases a dramatic effect. There is a coldness that may be felt in the meeting of the King and Queen. Her speech, at once so fulsome and so frigid, his answer, formal, self-contained, falling back on commonplaces, yet not concealing the taint of egotism and pride, are equally appropriate to the situation. His death moves horror more than pity; it is Cassandra of whom the Chorus say, 'I commiserate

[1] This much may be conceded to Dr. Verrall's suggestion of an Aegisthean faction of 'Conspirators.'

this more than the other.' Aegisthus is treated lightly and with contempt. He is a man of straw, whose recital of the story of Thyestes completes the account of antecedent circumstances.

The Herald, as such persons often do in Aeschylus, contributes much to the development of the action. His entrance delays that of Agamemnon, and holds the audience in suspense. His efforts to be cheerful in conversing with the Chorus only increase the gathering atmosphere of gloom. His description of the discomforts of the siege and the loss of friends, by which victory had been dearly won, has for its climax the vivid picture of the storm by which the victorious company was parted, and Agamemnon was separated from his brother.

The central interest of the *Agamemnon* turns, of course, upon the person of Clytemnestra, whose crime and its avowal form the crisis or culminating point. Her heroic or daemonic daring, her defiance of opinion, and her power of dissimulation, have been exemplified in the preceding scenes, while her eagerness for the approaching opportunity has been indicated through the Watchman's speech, which opens the play. And the motive of her act is manifest to all who have heard the Chorus telling of the piteous sacrifice of Iphigeneia. Her guilt with Aegisthus is a subsidiary circumstance, and is only glanced at until

she herself avows it after the murder. Even then the Elders are slow in speaking of it. But from the beginning of the drama there has been brooding over all minds, save those of the murderess and her unconscious victim, the dim apprehension of some approaching horror: even the Herald cannot shake off sad presentiments amidst the joy of his return. And the impression thus produced is deepened and intensified by the great scene between the Chorus and Cassandra, who supplies the element of pity, without which the *Agamemnon* would be too exclusively a tragedy of terror. She also serves to accentuate the tragic note of Destiny, by connecting the present horrors of the house of Pelops with the past. Agamemnon has appeared together with the captive Princess, has been received with fawning speeches, which he answers coldly; and he has finally been prevailed on by the wily importunity of the Queen to enter his own palace in the manner of an Eastern potentate, over rich purple carpetings,—to the horror of all Greek beholders, to whom such pride appeared certain to provoke the envy of the Gods, as in the case of Pausanias, also the victorious leader of an Hellenic army, it had manifestly led to disaster. Clytemnestra has come forth for a moment and impatiently summoned Cassandra, but has left the stage again, professing haste to accomplish some household

sacrifice. Then, after long silence, the captive Princess and prophetess utters her warnings, doomed as heretofore to disbelief. She sees in vision the impending act, with all its circumstances, and her own violent death, which is immediately to follow. Then, after turning away more than once, she goes within the palace. The exit of this most pathetic figure leaves the Proscenium vacant, and while the spectators are yet thrilled with the awe and pity of the great scene, the Chorus chant a few moralising lines.

Before they have well finished, the King's death-shriek is heard. The council of Elders are amazed, and hesitate. They have just concluded their feeble deliberations, and are going within, when they are suddenly confronted by the commanding figure of the Queen. By a device called the Ekkyclema, peculiar to the Attic stage, she glides forward from the central door of the palace (which is thrown open) on a low platform, with the corpse of Agamemnon beside her. That of Cassandra is also visible in the background. A convention of the theatre enables the spectators to imagine that the scene is within the house. Agamemnon is still enveloped in the blood-stained web with which he had been entangled, and his body leans against the side of the bath. Clytemnestra probably still holds the weapon with which she slew him—not an axe, as is frequently supposed, but 'the sword of

Aegisthus,' as is expressly stated in the *Choëphoroe*, line 1011.[1] This marks emphatically her relation to the man, and the nature of his complicity in the plot. He does not come upon the scene, however, until the Queen has gloried in her deed to the Argive Elders, who remonstrate feebly, but on the whole are loyal to the King. Aegisthus has his guards in readiness, and a conflict is imminent; but Clytemnestra has had enough of bloodshed, and appeases the strife. She alone, at this moment, is fully conscious of the situation.

An interval of at least eight years divides the action of the *Agamemnon* from that of the *Choëphoroe*, so named from the Chorus, who carry the libations which, at the bidding of Clytemnestra, Electra, the surviving daughter of Agamemnon, is to pour upon his grave. He had been buried with his fathers; but, as Clytemnestra had threatened, had been denied all funeral rites. Nay, more: to render his ghost more helpless she had mangled his remains. And for these eight years his tomb had continued without due honours. But in the preceding night a terrific dream had visited

[1] See above, p. xv, *note*. The notion of the axe in Sophocles and elsewhere is probably derived from the Homeric phrase, *ὡσεί τε κατέκτανε βοῦν ἐπὶ φάτνῃ*, perhaps also from *Cho.* 889, where Clytemnestra calls for a labourer's axe, wherewith to defend herself against her son. See the Frontispiece to this volume.

the guilty Queen. She dreamt that she had a serpent for her child, and the soothsayers declared that the dream was caused by the wrath of Agamemnon. She therefore sends the libation by the only hands from which the dead man is likely to receive it kindly.

Electra is a pathetic figure, by nature womanly and gentle, but embittered by long oppression, distracted with doubt and with the discouragement of hope deferred. She pours the libation; but her prayer is for the return of her brother, without whom she is powerless. Unknown to her, he is standing near. As told in the *Agamemnon*, he had grown up in Phocis, under the care of Strophius. But the hour of vengeance is now at hand, and Apollo has sent him on his dreadful mission. He is accompanied by Pylades, the son of Strophius and companion of his youth. Before all else they visit the tomb of Agamemnon; and the curl, which Orestes cuts off and offers there, leads the way for the simple, but most touching, recognition scene.

The Chorus consists of Trojan captive women, who, with Cassandra, had accompanied Agamemnon on his return, and are retained as household slaves of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra. While cherishing a faithful and fierce loyalty towards their murdered lord, they fulfil a twofold function, both as *dramatis personae* and as moralising the situation. As before remarked, it would

be an error of interpretation to force a harmony between these different aspects of their part. In some of their religious utterances they are simply a mouthpiece for the poet, and in their formal capacity (or as sharers of the lustral waters of the hearth) they lament the deaths of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, which they have eagerly desired. But as human beings they contribute a necessary link to the main action, which, apart from them, would seem improbable and repulsive. They supply the element of savage vindictiveness, born of cruel servitude, which is alien from the person of Electra, as conceived by Aeschylus, and gives felt and tangible support to the attempt of the youth Orestes. He has much need of such wild sympathy, besides the sacred friendship of Pylades, to nerve his arm for the unnatural stroke to which he is commanded by Apollo.

This is the purpose of the great 'Commatic' scene —if it should not rather be called a religious service, or litany to the dead—in which Orestes, Electra, and the several members of the Chorus invoke the spirit of Agamemnon to be present and give aid to his avenger.

If this passage appears inordinately long in proportion to the compass of the play, it should be measured rather in comparison with the whole Trilogy; and it is actually shorter than the Cassandra scene, which occupies the corresponding place of the *Agamemnon*,

leading up as either does to the catastrophe. It belongs to a class of supernatural effects which, like the witch-scenes in *Macbeth*, are apt to be unconvincing to the modern reader. But, if by an effort of imagination we have once realised the gloom of the situation and the horror of the impending act, the skill of the poet in thus indicating the extent of the revulsion by which the son is moved to execute justice upon his mother will be entirely vindicated.

In the *Choëphoroe*, Aegisthus is first slain and put out of the way. The hand of Orestes is thus already imbrued with blood not kindred to him, before he comes to the final act of unnatural violence. Moreover, the lament of Clytemnestra over her paramour, whom she really loves, constitutes an immediate provocation which makes the deed of matricide more possible. There still remains the most moving appeal of all: the son hesitates at the sight of his mother's breast. But Pylades (the Delphian devotee) is at hand, and recalls to him the divine injunction of Apollo. From this point onward he is resolute. The intrepid woman, who if time had been allowed her would ere this have felled her child with an axe, now threatens him with a mother's curse. But the thought of his father's curse prevails with him until the deed is accomplished. The mother's Furies are in reserve, and do not yet appal him. Thus the crisis of the whole Trilogy is

reached, the point which, in a Shakespearian drama, would have concluded the third act. The change and the conclusion are still to come; and (paradoxical as it may seem) the conclusion of this greatest of tragic productions is a happy one. Towards the end of the *Choëphoroe* the light is already breaking, but the clouds come down again before the close of this, the second play. Orestes at once assumes the attitude of self-defence, not against the sympathising Chorus, nor against his fellow-citizens whom he has delivered from the yoke of tyranny, but against the law of domestic harmony which he has outwardly broken. For the moment he pleads in vain. His mother's Furies are upon him, and pursue him forth. And it may be remarked here, parenthetically, what extraordinary histrionic powers must have been required in the actor of the part of Orestes at this juncture. To see the Furies who were still invisible to others, and make the whole concourse of spectators feel that he sees them, and to express in thrilling tones the consequent emotions, is an effort that might well task the most splendid of tragic powers.[1]

[1] K. O. Müller insists that the Furies are seen by the spectators, though not by the Chorus. He also thinks that the Chorus in the *Eumenides* are invisible to the Areopagites, etc. These are over-refinements. But it may be granted that, although the Furies in the *Choëphoroe* are not yet visible on the scene, they are really approaching, and are not mere creations of Orestes' fancy.

The impression so far left on the spectator's mind is one of horror, mingled with pity. These emotions do not all at once subside. But yet the key-note of the concluding drama is εὐφημία—religious peace. This is disturbed, but not finally overcome, by the threatening attitude of the Erinyes, who now at last assume a bodily shape. It is no doubt partly owing to the genius of Aeschylus that Athens was in later times regarded as the chief centre of the worship of these Powers, although we find several traces of it, possibly more ancient, in other parts of Hellas. Their shrine on the Areopagus was of historical interest, in that the assassination of Cylon and his fellows by the Alcmaeonidae, so fruitful in consequences, had stained that altar. The obscure question of the origin of this particular ritual need not be touched on here. The elements that entered into it in the time of Aeschylus are well stated in a few pregnant words of K. O. Müller's famous Dissertation :—

'Although indeed of itself the Erinys, that feeling of deep affront, is of a divine nature, the Erinys first acquired a noted and extensive cultus, and altogether more reality and personality, from the conception of both the great terrestrial and infernal deities, from whom come life and prosperity, as well as ruin and death, to mankind, as offended and angry beings, wherever mortal deeds have violated those sacred and

eternal laws of nature' (§ 86). Müller has also pointed out that the duty of avenging blood, devolving on the nearest kinsman, while belonging essentially to the infancy of political life, and maintaining its existence 'more among isolated hordes of rude mountaineers than among the more numerous and intermixed inhabitants of the plain,' had notwithstanding become firmly embedded in Attic law, and was 'still entwined in the most intimate union with all that was deemed sacred and venerable.' But 'the State had now assumed the office of mediator, and as such, upon the application of the relatives, it either took the charge of inflicting vengeance entirely off their hands, or else assigned certain means and limits for its execution' (§ 45).

From this amalgam of custom, ritual, tradition, and legal ordinance, Aeschylus takes occasion to read his fellow-citizens the lesson of Equity *versus* bare Revenge, or of 'mercy seasoning justice.' Exulting in the union of order and freedom, of reverence and boldness, and of the virtues of war and peace in the same community, he seeks to stamp with a religious sanction the principles to which he attributes his country's glories. And here, as in the *Prometheus*, he develops a religious conception in the form of an imagined contrast between an earlier and a later dispensation. The reciprocal horrors of the never-ending blood-feud

are stayed by the wisdom of Athena, and the judicial impartiality of her court of Areopagus. Apollo, the God of Light, thus prevails against the powers of darkness; or, rather, these last are transformed to instruments of blessing, by remaining in the land to warn the people of the majesty of those eternal laws, whose violation caused the previous confusion.

Dramatically, the *Eumenides* takes up and continues the unfinished threads of the two preceding dramas. At the close of the *Choëphoroe* the Chorus speak of the matricide of Orestes as a 'third storm' which had swept over the house, the two former being the banquet of Thyestes and the murder of Agamemnon. It is observable that the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, which supplied the actual human motive for Clytemnestra's crime, is not referred to either here or in the prophecy of Cassandra. The Erinys of Thyestes, then, overtakes Agamemnon, the Erinys of Agamemnon overtakes Clytemnestra, and his mother's Erinyes now pursue Orestes. Will these successive waves of action and reaction ever come to an end? or, in the words of the Chorus, 'whither will the sway of fate lead forth the issue?' That doubt, at the opening of the *Eumenides*, is still impending over the scene. The mind of the spectator is thenceforth carried up into a higher region, in which the mortal business which has thrilled him becomes subordinated to the conflict of supernal

powers, while the local centre of interest is transferred from Argos to the sacred hill of Athens. Clytemnestra was the principal figure in the *Agamemnon,* Orestes in the *Choëphoroe* ; but in the concluding play the part of protagonist is assumed by the Furies themselves, who now have taken visible shape. The drama thus reverts to the earlier mode, in which, as in the *Suppliant Women* and in the *Persians,* the action turned upon the fate of the Chorus ; and the work also ranks with those supernatural dramas in which divine persons have a share in the dialogue.

The singular argument by which Apollo pleads the cause of Orestes, reverting to a point of view which in the time of Aeschylus must have been already archaic, belongs to a strain of reasoning which has often characterised ecclesiastical or sacred courts. Such pleadings are apt to preserve, as flies in amber, relics of forgotten controversies, in this case descending from a time when tribal differences between those who, like the Lycians (Herod. i. 172), traced their genealogy through the mother, and those amongst whom the patriarchal system prevailed, were not yet finally adjusted. Athena's preference for the father appertains to the same order of thought.

The Goddess's casting vote, given by anticipation in favour of Orestes, has been the occasion of some unnecessary discussion. A fairly constant tradition shows

that when the voting in a criminal suit happened to be equal, the verdict was one of acquittal. Aeschylus, followed by other authorities, refers this custom to the imagined casting vote of Athena. According to Pollux viii. 90, quoted by Wecklein,[1] the Archon Basileus not only presided in his sacred character at the court of Areopagus, but, laying aside his crown, sometimes gave the casting vote, in this representing the Divine judgment. In the light of these traditions, against which Lucian's fancies are of little weight, the action of Athena in the *Eumenides* is clearly intelligible. The councillors vote one by one during the altercation between Apollo and the Furies (ll. 714-736). Athena also, probably, takes up a voting-pebble; but, as her vote is not given secretly, it would be futile for her to place it in the balloting-urn;—it matters not if there were one, two, or several; nor by what mark the ballots were distinguished. It is enough that she declares openly that her vote, or voting-ball, is given for Orestes. Then, between lines 745 and 754, the ballots are turned out, distinguished, and separated, and the numbers (or the pebbles themselves) are presented to Athena. The human votes prove equal; and the Goddess, in accordance with her previous statement, pronounces the verdict of acquittal.

[1] This is confirmed by the Aristotelian *Constitution of Athens*, § 57. See also Eur. *Iph. T.* 1470 ff.

The *Eumenides* concludes with a magnificent *Spectacle*, giving the note of triumph, which contrasts with the gloom of the *Agamemnon*, and completes the Trilogy. After a formal prayer, which it was needless to record in the text of the play, Athena marshals the procession, in which the torchbearing attendants lead, followed by the twelve Areopagites and the fifteen *Choreutae*,—no longer *Erinyes* and powers of darkness, but *Eumenides*, 'gentle powers,'—not for that reason less revered as *Semnae* (*dread*, or *awful*).

When the *Agamemnon*, *Choëphoroe*, and *Eumenides* are regarded as a single production, it becomes more than ever manifest how little the genius of Aeschylus was hampered by the so-called Aristotelian unities of time and place. The action of the *Agamemnon*, indeed, requires no change of scene beyond what is provided for through the Ekkyclema; although the spectators are carried in imagination to Ilium, to the camp at Aulis, and to the high seas. But with respect to the *Choëphoroe* one of two things must be supposed. Either, according to K. O. Müller's hypothesis, which has lately been revived and emphasised by Dr. Dörpfeld in connection with his own theories, the tomb of Agamemnon was represented by the Thymele, decorated for the occasion with images of Hermes and other gods; or there are two distinct

scenes, one before the tomb of Agamemnon, and one in front of the palace gate—from line 649 to the end of the play. In the former case the action from line 1 to line 582 must take place in the orchestra, the palace front being practically left in the background, whereas, on Orestes' second entrance, he and Pylades move directly to the gate, which becomes now the central point—the tomb in the foreground, although still visible, no longer forming part of the scene.

The change from Delphi to the Athenian Acropolis at *Eum.* 234, however it was managed in representation, is too obvious not to have been acknowledged. But it has been treated as wholly exceptional. It is so less in kind than in degree, and might probably be paralleled from other plays now lost to us.

The lapse of *time*, extending to months or years, which is imagined to intervene in the *Eumenides* between the proëm or induction and the main body of the drama, is much more remarkable, and may well be supposed to have been unique. There are two reasons for it. The first and more important is the depth of blood-guiltiness which Orestes has incurred. Time the consoler is also the purifier, according to the weighty line (*Eum.* 286): 'Time purges all things, growing old together with them.' The other reason is more external. While Athens and her patron-goddess claimed to have had the last word in the trial

of Orestes, there were many other shrines in Hellas of whose ritual and legend his cause formed an important part. To render these their due the poet has recourse to the fiction that the matricide had been chased over the habitable world from city to city, and on arriving at each new hearth had found a different purifier.

The flight of Athena from Sigeum to Athens, between lines 298 and 400, is regarded as miraculous, indeed, but is still to be measured by time. Even granting her steeds to be swifter than the Furies, who compared their own velocity to that of a ship (line 251), the most literal reader who accepts this incident need not be so much offended, as some have been, by the speed of Agamemnon, for whose voyage 473 lines (*Agam.* 23-496) have been allowed, and not only 100 as here. The first play of a trilogy necessarily contains some account of antecedent circumstances, which, in the Oresteian legend, are more than usually numerous and complex. The immediate cause of the action lies ten years back, and has been preceded by a chain of horrors to which the whole bears reference. Hence the more than epic discursiveness of the choral business in the earlier half of the play, which may appear disproportionate, unless considered with reference to the whole Trilogy. And where the survey of times is so wide-sweeping, it is not unnatural that days should shrink to hours, or that the 'unity of time' should,

as Paley remarks, be somewhat brusquely disregarded. In the interval between the appearance of the beacon-light and the entrance of the King there has been time at Argos for much searching of hearts and for an extended colloquy. All this conceals from the spectators the improbability of the swift passage. And the actual coming of Agamemnon is further delayed by the narration of the herald. In the *Choëphoroe*, although the action is, comparatively speaking, continuous, it is observable that many things happen after more than one reference has been made to the immediate coming on of night. All this is quite in keeping with the simplicity of antique art and the primitive conventions of the stage, and would never have been questioned but for the observation of Aristotle, who, truly enough, speaks of the *general tendency* of Tragedy to confine the action within one revolution of the sun.

The idea of Fate has often been regarded as the Central Motive in Greek Tragedy. And it would be idle to deny that the chief persons are continually represented as subject to an inscrutable and irresistible destiny. The language which conveys this notion is by no means consistent, but whether as the decree of Zeus, or the act of *Moira*, or as both combined, this element is always present, and overrules the action.

It is the dark background, which throws the moving figures into relief. But that does not exhaust the interest of the machinery. There is something else. In Aeschylus even more than in Sophocles the power of Fate is mysteriously associated with Justice, and (however contradictory this may appear) is not exclusive of human volition. The poet had in fact a controversy with the dark tradition that was interwoven with the material with which he worked. He was not satisfied, as Herodotus appears to have been, with the bare assumption that an individual was born to misery, —that evil was 'bound' to happen to him. Our poet had looked more deeply into human things. He saw clearly that conduct is the cardinal point. Nor is he contented with indorsing the superstitious feeling that high prosperity 'comes before a fall.' His peculiar message, declared by him with a vividness not to be paralleled except from Hebrew prophecy, is that sin brings retribution, and that justice alone insures true happiness for families and individuals. Prosperity is dangerous, because it tempts men to transgress. The work that 'stands for ever and ever' is that which is 'done in truth and equity.' Where Aeschylus had learned that lesson it would be hard to say. Echoes from early philosophers may have pointed to it. Meditation on life and death, encouraged by the Mysteries, may have deepened it. As it was, he found the

confirmation of it in the events of contemporary history, and read it into the old legends on which he worked. The 'Erinys' was the personification of certain crude anticipations of this his central idea. But in order to convey the thought of Aeschylus, the 'wild justice' represented by the Erinys required to be purified and civilised by the imagined influence of Athena.

Sin causes retribution, then; but what is 'Sin'? It is the transgression of those laws which have a Divine sanction, and which form the most essential bonds of human society. Most prominent amongst these are the rules which guard the sacredness of the family and inculcate conjugal fidelity and filial piety. All life is precious in the sight of the Gods, but the guilt of every criminal or violent act is indefinitely deepened by nearness of kindred. Respect for the suppliant and for the stranger, above all when he has been the giver of hospitality, also stands high in the scale of religious duty. In the application of religious laws as thus conceived there are occasional survivals of strange inconsistency, and even barbarity. But these exceptions take little from the nobleness of the main outlines. Nor do they diminish the importance of the fact that in the drama of Aeschylus a doctrine of restoration is set over against the doctrine of recompense for sin.

AGAMEMNON

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

WATCHMAN.

CHORUS OF 15 ARGIVE ELDERS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

HERALD.

AGAMEMNON.

CASSANDRA, *the daughter of Priam.*

AEGISTHUS.

SCENE

Argos : before the Palace of the Pelopidae.

Bayerische
Staatsbibliothek
MÜNCHEN

AGAMEMNON

THE WATCHMAN (*above*). Pray heaven I may be released from this weary task of year-long watching[1]! Couched here upon the Atreidae's roof, dog-like, reposing on my arm, I have come to know by heart the nightly assemblage of the stars,—the wanings and the risings of those constellations, bright potentates that, glittering in Ether, bring on for mankind their summers and their winter-seasons. And now I am watching for the flame-token, that fiery ray which is to bring from the Trojan land the rumour and report of overthrow.

While thus, night after night, I keep my homeless, dew-moistened bed, not visited by dreams:—for Fear usurps the place of Sleep beside me, so that I cannot close my eyelids fast in slumber:—then, if I think to sing or hum a tune, preparing such medicine to charm off sleep, I groan instead and weep over the disaster of this household, not managed, as erewhile it was, in the best way.—But now I pray for a blessed release from my labours through the sudden shining amidst darkness of the beacon-light, the bringer of glad tidings. [*The light appears.*

All hail, thou torch of Night, that makest for us the light as of a better day, and givest signal for the setting up of many a choir in Argos, to hail with song and dance this great intelligence.

Solá, Solá!

Thus loudly I proclaim it to Agamemnon's Queen, that she arise with haste and speedily raise within the palace an auspicious joyful cry, to welcome this light. For taken is the city of Troy; so yonder beacon brightly tells us. Nay, I myself will dance for prelude. I'll score my master's luck as having had a happy throw. This beacon-game has turned up for us three sixes! Well,—let him come! and may it be mine to hold in this my hand the dear hand of our kind master! Of what remains, I speak not. A ton's weight[2] is on my tongue. The house, if it could find a voice, might tell a true story. I, if I can help it, will not confess my knowledge, except to those who know. [*Exit.*

Chorus of Argive Elders (*entering*). We are now in the tenth year since Priam's noble adversary, lord Menelaus, and Agamemnon too,—firm yoke-fellows indued by Zeus with twofold royalty,—twin-throned, twin-sceptred,—led forth from hence their Argive levy of a thousand ships to aid the army, shouting war from angry hearts, as eagles[3] do, that swerving from the homeward path in pain for their young, fly circling aloft their eyrie, on oarlike pinions, having lost the watchful cares they had spent over their brood. Then one aloft, be it Apollo, or Pan, or Zeus, hearing that

bird-note, the shrill complaint of those their joint tenants of the sky, sends, for after-punishment of the wrong-doers, an Erinys-power.

Even so against Paris the supreme Lord of Hospitality sent Atreus' sons. His purpose was in the contention for a fickle woman to cause the Danaï and Trojans likewise many wrestling-bouts wearying the limbs, while knees should press the dust, and spear-shafts should be snapped in the onset. And now the conflict stands—even where it stands. But it shall end where fate hath determined it. Neither by after sacrifice or libation, nor by tears, shall the sinner cajole their relentless [4] wrath, whose sacrifices need no fire.

But we were left out of that day's levy by reason of our unregarded aged frames, and stay behind supporting upon staves our feeble childlike steps. For as the youngling in whose breast the sap of life springs freshly is no better than the aged, since no valour is there; so extreme old age, whose fading leaf is ready to fall, moves in a three-footed way, and, no more valiant than a child, moves vaguely like a dream in daylight.

Now, Clytemnestra, Tyndareus' daughter, what new thing is befallen?—what tidings hast thou, Queen? On what intelligence do thy missives kindle sacrifices around? The altars of all Gods that dwell in our city are ablaze with offerings;—Gods of the earth and sky, of field and market. As high as heaven on every side the flame ascends, fed cunningly by the pure unguent, whose mild persuasive promptings cannot deceive—the caked perfume from the royal closet [5].

Speak what of this thou canst, and mayest lawfully tell, and so bring healing for this care, which, as it is, one while fills the mind with misery :—another while Hope shining from the sacrifices with a kindly ray, bids back the never-satisfied thought of heart-devouring sorrow.

[*The Chorus, now ranged in the orchestra, chant the following strain.*

I have full power to sing the triumphantly auspicious departure of the men of valour. Still doth heavenly influence inspire my song, still doth mine age furnish me with might to tell how the twin-throned Sovereignty of the Achaeans, the rulers, one in mind, of Hellas' youth, were sped with vengeful spear-armed hands towards the Teucrian country by an ominous warlike bird. It was the King of birds, appearing to the Kings of the fleet,—two birds, one black, one backed with white. Fast by the mansion they appeared, on the spear-hand, conspicuously perched, devouring a pregnant hare and her full brood, whose course was ended ere begun. Say, 'Woe, woe, woe!' But let good auspices prevail!

The heedful prophet of the army, when he looked on the two warlike sons of Atreus with their differing strain, perceived in the hare-devourers the chiefs in command, and spake thus, interpreting the sign: 'This expedition doth at length make booty of Priam's town—and Fate shall ravage with hands of violence all the riches of the towers once crammed with public stores. Only, may no divine dislike prematurely dash

with gloom the great curb of Troy, to wit, the embattled army. For holy Artemis hath a grudge at the house,—at her sire's winged hounds that make a sacrifice of the cowering thing in her eaning-time together with her young. She abhors the eagles' banquet. Say, "Woe, woe, woe!" But let good auspices prevail!

'The Lovely Goddess, although so kind to the tender cubs of ravenous lions and unweaned younglings of all field-roving beasts of chase, consents[6] to ratify the happy fulfilment of the sign. The omens are favourable, but not unmixed with bane. To Apollo, god of healing, I pray, that she prepare not against the Danaï some delaying, ship-baffling adverse gales,— in her eagerness for a new sacrifice, unprecedented, preluding no feast, worker of strife within the home, annihilating wifely awe. Who keepeth house for him, awaiting his return?—Wrath, unforgetting, child-avenging, couched in dark ambush, and preparing the counter spring.'

So rang the voice of Calchas, telling, together with great good, of fatal consequence attending the royal house from the ominous birds. In symphony wherewith, say, 'Woe, woe, woe!' But let good auspices prevail!

Zeus!—howsoever he be named;—assuming this to be the name that pleases him, I so address him. Scanning all powers, and weighing them together with my need, I find none other on whom to cast with full assurance the burden of vain cares—save Zeus alone.

Not he that aforetime was the Mighty One, abounding with all-daring violence, shall even be named, since his day is over. And he that rose up afterward, he too is gone, for he hath found his vanquisher. But they who call on Zeus with a zealous mind, and celebrate his victories, shall attain wisdom to the height,—Zeus who hath paved a way for human thought, by ordaining this firm law—'He learns, who suffers.' In sleep there steals before the heart the pain of remembered grief, and submission comes to men who thought not of it. For this one ought to thank the Powers, who man resistlessly the dread rowing-bench above.

That day the elder admiral of the Achaean navy, blaming in nowise the soothsayer, but joining with the blast of adverse fortune,—(what time the Achaean host were afflicted with stress of weather draining their stores, as they held the coast over against Chalcis in the tide-washed region of resounding Aulis:—For a tempest had come from Strymon-mouth fraught with evil tarriance, with famine, with ill roadsteads, misguiding mariners, unsparing alike of hulls and cordage, which battered and defaced that flower of Argive chivalry, redoubling the loss of time through wear and tear[7]:—When thereupon the prophet had enounced a remedy for the sore storm, that to the chiefs was still more grievous, when he brought Artemis again to mind, whereat the Atreidae struck their staves upon the ground and could not refrain from tears:)—Even then the elder chieftain spake and said: 'A cruel fate were mine should I disobey; but not less cruel will it

be if I must slay my child, the worship of my home, and stain a father's hand on the altar-step with streams of virgin blood. Each course is full of misery. How should I break league and prove a defaulter from the fleet? It is but right that they should vehemently rage for the maiden's death, the sacrifice that is to stay the storm. May all end well!'

So when his neck had received the collar of Necessity, his spirit breathed an impious counterblast, impure, unholy, so that from that time forth his thoughts were turned to an unfaltering course of crime. The first blow [8] of calamity is rife with base suggestions, and through wretched infatuation makes mortals strangely bold. He, anyway, became his daughter's sacrificer, in aid of a woman-vindicating war, and for the inauguration of that voyage. Her prayers, her cries of 'Father!' —her tender maidenhood,—went for nothing with the Councillors who were bent on war. Her father, after prayer, gave signal to the ministering priests unshrinkingly to seize and lift her, as if she were a kid, above the altar, with the head forward, letting her garment fall, and to set a guard upon her lips, restraining the cry that might bring a curse upon her house, with the enforced dumbness of the compelling gag. Then as she shed to the ground her saffron robe, she smote each one of her sacrificers from her eyes with a pity-imploring glance, looking the while, as in a picture, like one desiring to speak—since oftentimes in her father's hospitable halls she had sung to them, and with pure virgin voice had kindly graced the hymn [9]

accompanying the third libation, that prayed for prosperity to her dear sire.

What followed next I saw not and I speak not of it: —The soothsaying craft of Calchas was not belied. There are those who shall know of what is coming, when they suffer it through the award of justice. But farewell at once to listening for it ere it come, since come it will even though you hear. To hearken beforehand is only to anticipate sorrow[10]. Clear and unmistakable it will arrive, dawning with the beams of day. Howbeit, may the sequel be propitious and answerable to the desires of this, the sole bulwark left to garrison the Apian land.

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS. Clytemnestra, we are come hither, bringing homage for thy majesty. The prince's wife should have due honour when the man's seat is empty. Our loyalty would gladly hear whether the sacrifices thou art ordaining are prompted by some happy tidings thou hast received, and attended with good hopes, or not. But if thou still keepest silence we shall not murmur.

CLYT. There is a proverb that says, 'Let the Morning bring good tidings from the Night, her mother.' Ye are to learn what is beyond your hopes, and will delight your ears. The Argives have taken the city of Priam.

CHOR. What dost thou say? The word escaped me through incredulity.

CLYT. That Troy belongs to the Achaeans. Is that plain?

CHOR. A joy is stealing over me, summoning up tears.

CLYT. Your eye then proves your heart to be loyal.

CHOR. Hast thou evidence of this report that may be trusted?

CLYT. Of course I have—unless some god has played us false.

CHOR. Thou regardest, haply, some persuasive vision of a dream?

CLYT. My judgement could not be convinced by slumberous fancies.

CHOR. But some chance word that lighted hath elated thee.

CLYT. Ye flout my wisdom, as if I were a silly girl.

CHOR. How long since, then, hath the city been ransacked?

CLYT. I tell you, in the night that even now hath given birth to the day.

CHOR. What newsbringer could arrive so speedily?

CLYT. Hephaestus, flashing it in brilliant flame from Ida. Fire was the post, and beacon despatched beacon onward hither. First Ida sped the light to the Hermaean bluff of Lemnos: then from that island the spiring flame was taken up by Athos. He reinforced the travelling torch with the blazing pine, that, as with a golden sunrise, overpeered the broad-backed sea, and carried on the tidings to the watch-tower on Macistus' top. Macistus, thoroughly wakeful and alert, performed his part in the transmission, and his beacon-

fires, far seen over the waters of Euripus, gave signal to the watchmen who were stationed on Messapius. They, when the message came, flashed back and sent it forward, by kindling there a mighty heap of aged heather. The flame was nowise dimmed as yet, but in full strength overleaped the Asopian plain, and with a steady radiance, like the orbed moon, beaming on the forehead of Cithaeron, awakened there a fresh relay of conduct for the courier fire. The guard there set gave welcome to the far-sent rays and made a greater blaze than those before them; the glare wherefrom shot over the Gorgopian bay, and arriving at Mount Aegiplanctus, bade fulfil my hest and burn for me the promised bonfire. Accordingly they sped the news, and with liberal hands fed a great beard of flame that rose on high, and glanced beyond the cliff that beetles over the Saronic gulf. It touched the goal; it struck on steep Arachnae, our close neighbouring hill. And from thence the fire, in lineal sequence from the Idaean flame, was flashed on this habitation of the Atreidae. Such was the torch-race we had ordered and prepared, each course supplied in turn from that preceding it. But the runner first and last was one, and ran from end to end victoriously. Ye hear the proof and fore-appointed token, which my husband has transmitted to me with true intelligence from Troy.

Chor. Lady, our thanks to heaven shall be given hereafter. Meanwhile, we would continue to listen wonderingly to thy tale, so thou wouldst speak again.

Clyt. The Achaeans at this hour are masters of

the land of Troy. In yonder town, methinks, there prevails a loud discordant crying. Pour vinegar and oil into the same jar, and you will find them sundered, not kindly blending. So the voices of the captor and of the captured there, tell in different tones of their widely differing fortune. The conquered, clinging to the prostrate bodies of their dear ones, sisters to brothers, wives to their mates, young children to their grey-haired sires, lament the fate of those they loved from a throat no longer free. The conquerors, sharp- 330
set by toilsome night-roving after battle, are ranged to break their fast on what the city contains, not by prescription, but as each has drawn his lot in the chance medley. So now they inhabit the Trojans' captive dwellings, having escaped from the frosts and dews of the open field. And, counting themselves happy, they will sleep all night without setting a guard. Now if they reverence well the gods that preside over the conquered land and respect their shrines, they may avoid being taken after taking the 340
prey. But let no lust of sacrilegious booty meanwhile invade the army, vanquished by love of gain. For they have yet to measure the return course[11], and win their way home safely. And though they should withdraw without direct offence against any god, the resentment of the slain may waken, should no cross-accident bar the homeward journey. You hear from me a woman's counsel. May the good prevail, un-questioned and manifest! Therein I crave the enjoy- 350
ment of my many blessings.

LEADER OF CHOR. O Queen, thy speech would become the lips of a wise and temperate man. Now that we have heard from thee those certain proofs, we are ready to address the Gods with due thanksgiving. Past labours have led to a fair and honourable close.

[*Exit* CLYT.

CHOR. O kingly Zeus, and thou Night, propitious mistress of splendours manifold, that didst hurl over the towers of Troy the close firm meshes of that all-encompassing net, that mighty snare of captivity, so that neither grown man nor youngling might rise out of it, or avoid the universal ruin! With awe I worship Zeus, the friend of hospitality, who hath effected this. Long since he had bent his bow at Paris, with a perfect aim, that neither should the shaft fall short of the mark, nor ineffectually alight beyond the stars.

From Zeus came the stroke they have experienced. So far one may trace the matter and not fail. They fared as he decreed. There was one who said it could not be deemed worthy of Gods to care for mortal doings, when any trampled on the grace of things inviolable. But he was an impious man.

The truth hath been revealed to the descendants of those whose warrior-spirits were bent on deeds of enormous daring, overpassing justice, when their halls were crammed unduly, beyond what is best. Let that be granted 'best,' where sorrow comes not. That shall fully satisfy whoever is wise. For riches afford no shelter to him who, waxing wanton, kicks at the exalted seat of justice, setting her at nought.

But the wretched influence, disastrous birth of brooding infatuation, forces its way till remedies are utterly vain. The harm cannot be hid, but shines with a ruinous gleam. Like spurious metal, the life, being brought to the test through friction and contact, shows a dark stain. Boylike, the man runs wilfully in chase of a flying bird, and brings intolerable harm upon his people. Deaf to his prayers, the vindictive gods shall overtake the unrighteous one who walks in those ways.

Even such an one was Paris, who visited the home of the Atreidae, and defiled the hospitable board by stealing the wife. She left behind her, for the men of Argos, the hurtling of shields and spears and arming of war-vessels; and taking with her as a dowry the ruin of Troy, stepped lightly through the doorway, meditating unendurable crime: while thus the home-interpreters [12], deeply groaning, spake:—'Alas, for the palace! Alas, for our chief! Alas! for the couch, whither she came lovingly to meet her lord! He is yonder, silent, dishonoured, unreproaching, the witness of his own irreparable sorrow [13]. Through the longing for her who is beyond the sea, a phantom shall seem to queen it in the hall. The lovely statues there are hated by her lord. In the lack of living glances there is no beauty more.'

Only in dreams an apparition, born of grief, brings a vain joy. For it is vain, when, just as one thinks to be beholding good, the vision fleets out of his arms with wings that follow hard upon the footsteps of

sleep. Such are the sorrows at the hearth within the home; and others too there are, that transcend these. And throughout Hellas, whencesoever one went forth to join that armament, the signs are manifest of heart-rending woe. Much there is that pierces to the quick. They know whom they sped forth, but what returns to each man's home? Not the person of the warrior, but the urn that holds his ashes. That heavy dust, blackened in the fire, disappointing the desire of tears, is all that he, the War-god, who traffics in the bodies of men, the grim usurer who sways his balance amidst the hurtling fray, sends back to friends from Ilium. In place of men, he freights with ashes the funeral-vases, easily stowed away. Then they groan out their eulogy over each warrior, saying of one how that he was skilled in fight, and of one that he fell nobly amidst carnage, in the cause of another's wife. These words are muttered in hushed tones, while an indignant grudge spreads covertly against Atreus' sons, who stand in the forefront of the quarrel. Others, without suffering change, are laid in their manly beauty within Trojan earth, before the enemy's wall. The conquered land they occupy conceals them.

Meanwhile the angry murmurs of the citizens are full of danger, meaning nothing less than a people's curse, which fails not. My anxious thought is looking for some dark lurking issue. The eyes of the Gods are ever on the man of blood. He who without right is fortunate, is enfeebled late or soon by the gloomy Erinys, and finds a dire reverse. He sinks

into an abyss of nothingness, where there is no help for him.

Moreover, to be praised exceedingly is a dangerous thing. The lightning from Heaven is hurled at the high places[14]. I choose a fortune that is exempt from envy. I would not be the sacker of a town, nor yet would I myself behold my life made subject to another.

The flame that told of good has darted a swift rumour throughout the city, but whether it be true, who knoweth? or whether there has not been some divine deception? Who is so childish or so bereft of sense as to let his heart be inflamed by the fire-brought news,—to be vexed thereafter with an altered report? It beseems a woman's temper to yield assent before proof shown. The pale of woman's judgment is soon encroached on and passed over,—so credulous is she. The glory that lies in a woman's voice quickly fades and dies away.

Leader of Chor. Now we shall soon know concerning the transmission of the flashing beacon-fires, whether they told truly, or, like a dream, this light that came so pleasingly deceived our thought. I see at hand a Herald approaching from the shore. He is overshadowed with olive-boughs, and the dry dust[15], own sister and neighbour to damp clay, assures me that he will deliver his message not voicelessly, nor with flame-signals born from the combustion of mountain-wood, but with clear utterance forthwith will tell you either to rejoice the more, or—an alternative which I refuse

to entertain. Let there be fair corroboration of what promised fairly.

CHOR. Whosoever would unspeak that prayer for this our state, may he himself reap the fruits of his perversity !

Enter the HERALD, *attended.*

HERALD. O hallowed ground of Argolis, where my fathers trod, in the light of this tenth year I find thee! This one thing hoped for I obtain, though rudely disappointed of so many. I had indeed despaired even of dying upon Argive soil and sharing in the blessed privilege of burial there. Then hail, familiar Earth, familiar Sunlight ! Hail, Zeus, who sittest aloft presiding over this land ! Hail, Pytho's lord ! No longer mayst thou shower on us thy fatal shafts ! We felt enough of thine enmity beside Scamander. Now, lord Apollo, be once more our saviour and our God of healing ! Yea, all the great Gods in their conclave I address [16], and him in chief whom we heralds worship, Hermes the dear herald,—and those heroes of old time whose spirits sent us forth :—With kindly welcome receive ye back again this remnant that the war hath left.

Dear roofs and palace-halls of our Kings ! dread thrones beside the gateway, and Gods that front the morning, if ever heretofore ye did so, with looks of festal cheer to-day receive as ye ought our sovereign lord who has been so long away. He comes,—Prince Agamemnon comes,—bringing a light to illuminate your gloom, a light wherein all who are here participate. Salute

him, all ye people,—it is meet ye should,—for he hath dug up the Trojan field with the spade of retributive Zeus. Therewith that ground is thoroughly worked over.

The altars and the shrines of Gods that were there are no more seen; all germs of life have been destroyed out of the land.

Such a yoke hath been laid on the proud neck of Troy by Atreus' princely elder son, who is now arrived, thus favoured of Heaven, and worthiest to receive homage of all who live this day. Since neither Paris, nor the people, his abettors in crime, may boast that the punishment hath fallen short of the deed. Convicted of theft and robbery too [17], he hath not only lost his prize, but hath laid low in utter ruin his native country and his paternal home. The sons of Priam have paid twofold for their transgression.

LEADER OF CHOR. All joy to thee, O herald of the embattled Achaeans!

HERALD. I do rejoice; yea, and if Heaven so wills it, I refuse not to die.

LEADER OF CHOR. Wert thou so exercised with longing for the land of thy birth?

HERALD. Yes. Tears are welling up into mine eyes: so glad I am.

LEADER OF CHOR. Therein thou wert happily diseased.

HERALD. How? Tell me. Let me understand you.

LEADER OF CHOR. Being smitten with longing for those who loved you in return.

HERALD. Do you mean that the country here was longing for her army?

LEADER OF CHOR. From this dark spirit I have heaved many a sigh.

HERALD. Whence came the gloom that lay so heavy upon your souls [18] ?

LEADER OF CHOR. Silence has long been my remedy against mischance.

HERALD. How mean you ? Had you any one to fear, when your sovereign was abroad ?

LEADER OF CHOR. So that, to echo your own words, I could have gladly died [19].

HERALD. I meant it because success has come. Much else, in the long retrospect, is mingled of things smooth and questionable. Who, that is not a god, passeth the whole of his existence without suffering ? Were I to recount the labours, the rough lodging, the narrow bunks on shipboard, with scant covering,— what mourned we not the lack of from day to day [20] ? Our lot on shore was still more dismal. Our bivouac was close beneath the enemy's wall ; where rain from above and dews from the open field covered us with drizzling moisture, that ruined our garments beyond remedy, and made our matted hair like that of beasts. Or should I tell you of the eagle-killing storm, with what intolerable force it came forth from the snows of Ida,—or of the sweltering heat, when the deep becalmed in his noon-day couch lay slumbering motionless ? Why sorrow for past toil or suffering ?— past indeed for the dead, who are too weary to care to rise again. Why count them over ? They are spent. Or why should the living grieve at froward fortune ?

'Farewell to calamity,' I say. For us of the host of Argos who remain, advantage outweighs distress, so that, fleeting over land and seas, we may boldly say in presence of this day's sun :—'The Argive armament, having finally conquered Troy, fix up these spoils to the glory of the Hellenic gods, an added brightness to their temples for evermore.' Give ear, O people; and call your country and your generals blessed. So the grace of Zeus, that hath accomplished this, shall win due honour. This, Argives, is my tale at full.

CHOR. Your words prevail with me. I yield belief to them. For the learning of good tidings the old are ever young. And though Clytemnestra and the royal house have naturally the prime interest herein, it is but right that I too should partake in the gain.

Re-enter CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLYT. I shouted for gladness long ago, when in the night the fiery harbinger came that first told of conquest, of the devastation of Troy. Some one then upbraided me and said, 'Giving credence to fire-signals, dost thou believe that at this moment Troy has been overthrown? How womanlike to be so easily uplifted!' Such talk gave me out for a deluded one. But yet I sacrificed. And in female strains a cry of joy was raised in every quarter of the city, while to the auspicious sound, within the holy precinct, they allayed the fragrant flame that consumed the frankincense. You need not inform me more at length. I shall learn all from the very lips of our great lord. But I must

haste to receive most royally my revered husband at his return. (What light to a woman's eyes is sweeter than when she opens the gates for him, her man, whom Heaven had brought safe from the war?) Report this message to him, that he come quickly,—the desire of Argos. And let him find a faithful wife, unaltered as he left her, the watcher of his home, hostile to his enemies, but ever kind to him; and, for the rest, untampered with, a sealed possession, unimpaired in all that length of time. Of joy or guilty converse with another man I am as ignorant as of the craft of the smith [21]. Such is my declaration, given in all sincerity, and it is a boast which a princess need not be ashamed to utter. [*Exit.*

LEADER OF CHOR. (*to the Herald*). That was fairly spoken. Your ears [22] could not fail to interpret clearly. But tell us, herald: it is of Menelaus I would learn:—Menelaus, whom this land delights to honour and to obey. Comes he safely to his home along with you?

HERALD. Were I falsely to give a good report, my friends would reap from it only a short-lived joy.

CHOR. Tell truth, then, and may the truth be happy! When good and true are sundered, it cannot well be hid.

HERALD. He is lost from the Achaean army's ken. His ship and he are vanished. That is the truth.

CHOR. Do you mean that he was seen launching forth from Ilios? or was he snatched away from the fleet by a storm whose violence affected all?

HERALD. There you have hit the mark, like a first-rate archer. You have expressed, in one short phrase, an immense disaster.

CHOR. But what saith Rumour? Do other mariners report of him as alive or dead?

HERALD. No one knows enough to answer that inquiry clearly; except the Sun-god, who fosters what Earth brings forth.

CHOR. Say, how then did the tempest visit your feet, to end with such an outcome of divine anger?

HERALD. It beseems not to stain with evil tidings the light of an auspicious day. Honours paid to Heavenly Powers should be unalloyed[23]. This Paean of the Furies might suit the lowering brows of one who from a ruined army brought news of horrible disaster,— how the city suffered from the wound that with one stroke afflicted the whole people, while from many several homes full many a warrior had been stricken with the keen scourge which the War-god loves;—he that was laden with that twofold burden of death, who brought with him that doubly-armèd Até, might chant this burden also, and not break tune. But I, who am come with happy tidings to a city exulting in her fair fortune, wherefore should I dash my good with bad by telling of the tempest that fell upon the Achaeans, not without spite from Heaven? Fire and the Sea, powers hitherto irreconcilable, conspired together, and proved their league by devastating the hapless host of the Argives. At dead of night came on the baleful billowy trouble, while

Thracian winds crashed the hulls together in a jostling herd, that thrust one another perforce at the will of the wild tempest, as it pelted them with sleet and brine, until they foundered and sank from sight, driven ruthlessly by that bad herdsman. Now when the clear daylight came again, the Sun revealed to us the field of
660 the broad Aegean, blossomed over with dead bodies of Achaean warriors and wrecks of warships. Ourselves, meanwhile, and our vessel with unscathed hull, some Power, whether by craft or influence, brought off: a God it must have been, no mortal, that so handled the ship,—whereon Fortune herself as preserver deigned to preside,—as neither to ride where heavy seas broke over her, nor run aground against a rock-lanced, iron-bound coast. Thereafter, delivered as we were from the dreadful sea, scarcely trusting in our good fortune,
670 our thoughts began to tend upon a fresh grief on account of our navy thus battered and ill-bested. And now, if any of our comrades are yet alive, they doubtless talk of us as being no more, even as we imagine about them. But may all end happily! As for Menelaus, before all else expect him to come. If anywhere the bright Sun beholds him and knows of him as living, by the grace of Zeus, who wills not that his seed should perish, he will return to his Argive home, we may well believe. Ye have heard all I have to
680 tell, and you may be assured that all that I have told is true. [*Exit.*

CHOR. Who named her so unerringly? Was it some one whom we dream not of, foreknowing destiny, and

happy in his foretelling? Who named her 'Helenè'[24]?
—the spear-wedded one—the strife-surrounded? For,
fittingly thereunto, engulfing ships and men and cities,
she left the daintily-woven curtains of her bower,
and, wafted by the breath of giant Zephyrus, sailed
forth. And on the invisible track of their oars there
also sailed a full cry of shielded warriors bent on bloody
arbitrament. Meanwhile they had landed on the leafy
bank of winding Simois. It was the fateful design of
heavenly Wrath that brought upon Ilios that marriage-
bond,—rightly so named,—Wrath, that in after time
would wreak the dishonour done to the guest-table
and to hospitable Zeus by those who loudly celebrated
the marriage-hymn, wherewith it fell that day to her
new brethren to honour the bride. But now Priam's
time-worn city has learned a different tune, with wail-
ing voice and heavy groans calling out on Paris, whose
marriage was a curse—Priam's city that hath already
passed an age of lamentation for her citizens, whose
wretched violent deaths she hath all wretchedly
endured.

A man once reared a lion's cub in his house, a
scarce-weaned fosterling, still craving for the dug. At
the first assay and opening of his life he was gentle,
a kindly playmate for the boys, a cheering object for
their elders to look upon; many a time, like an infant,
being held in arms; now brightening at touch of hand,
now cringing under the stress of appetite. But in the
fulness of his days he revealed the parent strain. In
requital for nurture he made him a feast, unbidden,

with horrid slaughter of the flock. The house was bedabbled with gore; the despairing household stood aghast with grief: the destruction was wide and irremediable. By some Divine commission, to be a High Priest of calamity, he had been nourished as an inmate of that home.

Even such, methinks, was her coming to Ilios town, a spirit as of a windless calm, a tranquil joy for wealth to brood over, an eye whose glances soothe, a blossom of love stinging desire into madness. But by and by her aspect changed and issued in a bitter sequel of consummated rites. It was the Zeus of hospitality who brought her amongst the sons of Priam, a Fury of lament for bridal, a companion and an inmate full of bane.

Mankind have an ancient saying,—it was framed and uttered of old,—that a mortal's happiness, when grown up to the height, brings forth and dies not childless; that out of good fortune springs insatiable misery to plague the race. But I have my own thought apart, that impious deeds beget a multitudinous brood, like their progenitors, but the house that ever holds to right hath ever fair issue of good fortune.

Past insolence gives birth to youthful insolence that exults in human misery, whenever the destined hour of such nativity arrives[25], a godless Power of irresistible boldness, a spirit of ruinous fatality darkly weighing down the roof, a child resembling its parent.

The light of Justice shines in smoky dwellings. She respects the modest life; but halls overlaid with

gold, where hands are unclean, she leaves with averted eyes, to visit homes that are unprofaned. She bows not before the power of wealth when it is spuriously stamped with praise. She is guiding all things towards the final goal.

Enter AGAMEMNON *in a chariot with* CASSANDRA, *others following.*

LEADER OF CHOR. O my King, despoiler of Troy city, say, how shall I address thee, in what terms pay homage, neither coming short of due kindness, nor launching forth too far? There are many in this world who prefer appearance and overpass the right. All are ready to groan for the unfortunate, but no pang meanwhile strikes down to their inward part. And with becoming semblance, they feign a sympathetic joy, forcing smiles on countenances where smiles are none. But the skilled discerner of the flock may well read the true expression of those eyes that with a thin and waterish friendship flatter from a seemingly loyal heart.

For thee, when formerly thou ledst forth an army in the cause of Helen,—I will not hide it,—I pictured thee in no fair colours, but regarded thee as one that managed ill the helm of his mind, winning as thou didst through sacrifice the valour of men appointed to death. But now my loyalty is deep and full of kindness for those whose labours have had a happy end. In time thou shalt discover, so thou but inquire it out, who amongst thy citizens at home have dealt right-

ously, and who have been unfaithful in their stewardship.

AGAMEMNON (*speaking from the chariot*). My first greeting must be given to Argos and the Gods who dwell in her. They share with me the glory of my home-coming and of my righteous act in punishing the city of Priam. The heavenly powers, hearkening to the cause not pled with lips, cast their votes with one consent into the red urn, unanimous for the deathful ruin of Ilium. The other vase was visited only by hope, and was replenished by no hand[26]. The city's capture is even now well seen by the smoke of her destruction. For Até's fires of sacrifice have not yet died down. Troy's expiring embers send out a blast that reeks with wealth consumed. Wherefore the gratitude we owe to Heaven is eternal. We caught the people in a close snare of overwhelming vengeance. The city was levelled in the dust for a woman's sake, by that miracle of Argive birth, the shield-bearing band, a fierce portent, child of the steed, that leapt suddenly forth about the setting of the Pleiades. A ravening lion, he bounded over the fencèd wall, and lapped abundantly of the blood of princely men.

All this I have said, by way of prelude, in honour of the Gods. But I do not forget the spirit of your words to me. I heartily respond to them; yea, I join in your contention. Few indeed are they amongst mankind whose inborn nature prompts them to yield to their prosperous friend the tribute of a respect that is unalloyed with envy. The venom of unkindness settles

at the heart and makes the owner of any trouble to be doubly burdened. He is weighed down with his own grief, and groans, moreover, at the sight of other people's happiness. I can speak of it advisedly; for I know right well how men who seemed most kind in their loyalty to me were but the mirrored likenesses of comradeship, mere unsubstantial shadows. Odysseus, who was compelled to the voyage, alone, when once in harness, proved a willing yokefellow to me. I say it of him, whether he be dead or yet alive.

For the rest, as touching the city and the Gods, we will deliberate in full concourse, holding a general assembly. Our aim therein shall be to make perpetual whatever in our state is well; and if anywhere some healing remedy is needed, we will endeavour, by applying surgery or cautery with good heed, to avert the threatened mischief.

Now pass I to my halls, and to the chambers round the hearth, when first of all I will extend my right hand in honoured greeting to the Gods, who sped me on my distant voyage and have brought me home again. May victory, who has accompanied me, never more depart!

CLYTEMNESTRA (*re-entering*). Men of our city, elders of the Argive state, who are assembled here, I will not be ashamed to speak before you of my wifely disposition. Timidity wears away with time. I need no hint from any man when I declare to you how heavily my life was passed, while he who now is here was before Ilium. For a woman, in absence of the man,

to sit forlorn in the house, is in any case a terrible evil. Many a cross rumour vexes her,—one witness telling in her ear that he is come; another harshly whispering, 'He brings home with him a mischief worse than his departure' [27]. If our hero had received as many wounds as were currently reported hitherward, one might say that he was pierced in more places than a hunting-net. Or, had he died as often as he was rumoured to be dead, a second Geryon, he must have had three bodies at least, and put on (above him—I say nothing of the ground beneath) a threefold mantle of earth, having died once in each several form. By reason of such cross, vexing rumours, many a noose upon my neck, suspended from above, hath been untied by those who laid violent hold on me. In consequence of this distress, he who ought to have been here, our child Orestes, the firm pledge of our mutual faith, is absent hence. Nay, marvel not! Our kind war-friend Strophius in Phocis took charge of him, forewarning me of a twofold peril—thine own at Troy, and ours, if noisy popular tumult should overthrow the Council; as it is born in men, when any one is down, to trample on him. Herein I urge a plea that is innocent of guile. I wept indeed until the flushing tide of tears had run dry and there was no moisture left. And going late to rest on my sleepless bed, I mourned for the still neglected beacon-fires that had been prepared to herald thy return. The shrill insistent buzz of the gnat would wake me, while in my dreams about thee I saw horrors more than the time of sleep could hold.

All this I suffered; but it is past. And now, with a heart exempt from care, it is mine to cry, Behold the watch-dog of our fold, the mainstay of our vessel, the pillar from ground to summit that supports our roof, an only son to his sire, or land to mariners appearing beyond their hopes; fair daylight after tempest, or flowing water-springs cheering the thirsty wayfarer. Ever joyful it is to escape from distress.

With such words I count it meet that I address thee. Let envy remain aloof. We suffered miseries enow in the past time. Now, dear one, descend, I pray thee, from that chariot, not setting upon the earth thy foot, the vanquisher of Troy.

Come, maidens, why delay ye, whose appointed task it is to pave the ground of his pathway with tapestries? Forthwith let there be made a purple-strewn road, and let Justice lead him to the home he looked not for!

As to what remains, thought yielding not to slumber shall order it righteously according to Divine decree.

AGAM. Offspring of Leda, sole guardian of my palace-hall, thy speech, in accord with my long absence, hath been protracted. Yet for fitting commendation, that rich guerdon, I must look elsewhere. And do not, womanlike, attempt to spoil and pamper me, nor, like a cringing Asiatic, approach me with prostrations and open-mouthed 'salaams,' nor draw Envy on my path by paving it with gorgeous webs. Such honours are for the Gods alone. I cannot think without alarm of a mere mortal setting foot on fair embroideries. I

claim your homage as a man, not as being Divine. Fame sounds her note without rich carpets and broidered finery. A modest heart is the best of blessings. The name of happy should be reserved for him whose life is ended in kindly wellbeing [28]. Live we by that rule in all things, and I shall have no fear.

CLYT. Tell me, your wife, one thing, and honestly speak your mind.

AGAM. I 'll not disguise my mind, nor alter it, you may be sure.

CLYT. In danger you might have vowed to the Gods to do as I request you now.

AGAM. No man more easily. Experience prompts me to that reply [29].

CLYT. And what of Priam, if he had had the victory to-day?

AGAM. His pathway would have been resplendent, I believe.

CLYT. Be not shamefast, now, before human censure.

AGAM. Yet the outcry of a noisy populace is no light thing.

CLYT. He who is not envied is never admired.

AGAM. To be contentious is unbecoming in a woman.

CLYT. It is becoming in the fortunate to give way.

AGAM. Are you really so bent on victory in this war?

CLYT. Consent, and with voluntary grace pass your conquest on to me.

AGAM. Well, then, since thou art so bent on this, let some one undo the slipper that slavishly supports my treading, lest as I trample on yonder purple

dyes, some god should glance malignly on me from far. (*He descends from the car.*) It shames me no little to be thus luxurious, pressing with my footstep all this woven wealth. Well, that is agreed. And now let me beg that you will kindly receive this stranger (*pointing to Cassandra*). He who shows clemency in his triumph is regarded gently by the Gods, as they look down on him. This maid, presented to me by the army, the chosen flower from rich spoils, accompanies me home.

Now, since I am subdued to obey you in this, I will march over the purple pathway, and go within my hall.

Clyt. The Sea—and who shall dry it up?—is there eternally to nourish the precious juice of purple stain, abundant, ever-renewable, for dyeing robes withal. Whereof our house, my king, by the blessing of Heaven, hath ample store. It knows not penury. Much trampling of rich garments would I have vowed, had some oracle enjoined it on the house, as I cast about for means to bring home again a life so dear. Our root was not destroyed, but now the spreading foliage is returned, that shades the Dogstar from us. Thy home-coming betokens warmth in winter to us; but when the power of Zeus is turning sap in the sour grape to wine, there is coolness in the palace, if our man of men is moving therein. [*He goes within.*

O Zeus, completer of all things, complete thine answer to my prayers: and give good heed to that which thou art bringing to pass. [*Exeunt.*

Chor. Why hovers before my boding mind this warning finger[30], that will not remove? Why sounds unbidden, unhired, this prophesying strain? Why cannot my soul reject it like a puzzling dream, and again have confident Hope enthroned within her? That time is long since past, when the navy that had set forth for Troy lost its prime of youth, while the mooring cables of its many ships remained fast upon the sandy shore[31].

I am myself the witness of the King's return. Mine eyes declare it to me. Yet my spirit within me, self-inspired, still chants that lyreless lay of the Erinys, no whit enjoying the dear encouragement of Hope. Not idle, assuredly, is this inward monitor, the heart which throbs with ominous tumult against a truthful breast. Yet may the end belie mine expectation, and fall contrariwise, bringing auguries to nought!

Great health is apt to end in dangerous presumption: thin is the wall that parts her from impending disease. The man's destiny as it sails forward with smooth career strikes suddenly the hidden reef.

Then, if Caution flings overboard, with prudent liberality, some part of his possessions, the whole fabric doth not sink, over-weighted with calamity, nor doth he make utter shipwreck. Abundant bounty from Zeus, and from unfailing harvest-fields, cause Famine to disappear.

But when man's dark blood hath once fallen to earth at his feet in death, who by any charm shall call it up again? Why, if that might be, should Zeus in

prudent care have made an end of him who had learned rightly how to bring back the dead?

Were it not that over-mastering destiny from Heaven controls my lot, and makes it of small effect, my heart should have uttered this, not waiting for the tongue. But, as it is, my soul cries out unheard, being pained to the core, and having no hope to evolve any timely counsel from her burning thought.

Re-enter CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLYT. Thou, too, Cassandra, get thee within! Heaven hath mercifully ruled it that in our house thou shouldst be a sharer of the lustral fount, as one of many slaves that stand around the household altar. Be not proud, therefore, but come down from that car. They say, Alcmena's son was once sold to bondage and endured to eat the bread of servitude. And one on whom that irrevocable lot hath fallen should be duly thankful if his masters be the inheritors of ancient wealth. Those who reap an unexpected harvest are ever harsh and exorbitant in command. There,—that is my ordinary welcome.

LEADER OF CHOR. Her speech to thee is ended, and its meaning is manifest. Thou art encompassed in the toils of fate, and it remains for thee to yield, if thou wilt yield; but methinks thou wilt not.

CLYT. Nay, unless like the twittering swallow she be the possessor of an outlandish tongue, my speech must find its way and prevail with her.

CHOR. Go with her. She counsels what is best as

things now are. Consent, and leave thy seat upon the chariot yonder.

CLYT. I have no time to waste out here. The victims at our midmost altar by now are standing for sacrifice, a thank-offering for unlooked-for mercies. If thou wilt do my bidding then, do it at once, but if thou hast no sense, and takest not my meaning, tell it instead of speech with some gesture of thy barbarous hand.

CHOR. The stranger seems to have need of an interpreter to make things clear to her. Her way is that of a wild creature newly caught.

CLYT. She must be a maniac, governed by insane impulses, who comes hither from her newly captured city, and cannot bear the curb until she breathe out her spirit in bloody foam. I will not be disgraced by throwing more words away. [*Exit* CLYTEMNESTRA.

LEADER OF CHOR. But I, for I pity thee, will not let my anger rise. Come, hapless one, leave yonder car bereft of thee; yield to what is now inevitable. Try the yoke, which thou hast not felt till now.

CASS. O woe, woe, woe! Apollo! Apollo!

CHOR. Why criest thou of woe to Phoebus? He is not one to be addressed with lamentation.

CASS. O woe, woe, woe! Apollo! Apollo!

CHOR. Again with evil-omened crying she calls on him whom it befits not to have to do with mourning.

CASS. Apollo! God of our streets! Apollon[32] to me!

For thou hast with ease destroyed me this second time.

Chor. She seems about to prophesy of her own affliction. The divine nature abides within her, although a captive.

Cass. Apollo! Apollo of our streets! Apollon to me!—Ah, whither then didst thou lead me? To what mansion?

Chor. The home of the Atreidae; if thou art not aware of that, I tell it thee, and thou wilt not have to say that I have told thee falsely.

Cass. Ah! Ah! Nay, an ungodly roof, acquainted with many horrible crimes of slaughtered kin, with stranglings! a murderous receptacle of human blood, of infant gore [33].

Chor. The stranger seems to be keen-scented, like a questing hound. She snuffs after blood-marks, and she will find them.

Cass. Ah! Ah! Yea, for I trust these tokens:—the little children yonder, wailing of their violent deaths, and of the roasted flesh whereof their father ate!

Chor. Truly we had heard of thy prophetic gift, but we are not seeking for a prophet.

Cass. Oh horror! what doth she intend? what is this great new grief? A mighty mischief she intends within these walls:—the despair of lovers, hard to remedy;—while succour stands far aloof.

Chor. This oracle I know not. The former was clear. For the whole city rings of it.

Cass. Wretch! wilt thou accomplish that? The husband of thy bed,—when thou hast made him bright with bathing him—— How shall I tell the end? It will come quickly. Blow after blow she deals at him.

Chor. Still I comprehend not. The riddling thickly-veiled prophecy leaves me at fault.

Cass. Oh! what is here? what apparition? Is it a hunting-net of hell[34]? Nay, it is the snare that surprises him in his repose, that hath part in slaying him. Let the troop that never has enough in devouring the race shout exultingly over the heinous sacrifice.

Chor. Why summonest thou that Fury to lift her voice in the palace? Thy words oppress me with gloom. And to my heart the pale death-drop runs[35], that in men mortally wounded sinks together with the setting rays of life.

Cass. Ah! Look! look! look! Hold off the Bull there from the Cow! She hath caught him in the web, and is goring him with her iron horn! He falls in the hollow water-vessel. I am telling you the story of the crafty murderous basin.

Chor. I would not boast great skill as an interpreter. But to my mind, that prophecy augurs harm. Yet what good word hath prophecy for the world! It is a voluble art that, by chanting suggested evils in men's ears, strikes mortal apprehensions with a religious awe.

Cass. O, alas for my fortune, ill-starred maid! I

chant forth my own fate, that I may mingle it with thine[36]. To what an end didst thou bring me home with thee! To die along with thee,—nought else! —only to die!

Chor. Thou art maddened, methinks, and Heaven-possessed; and utterest wild music concerning thine own lot, like the brown nightingale that with never-wearied note out of her frenzied mind mourns 'Itys,' —ever 'Itys,'—through a life that is overgrown with miseries.

Cass. Ah! were my fate like hers, the high-voiced songstress!—whom divine power hath encased in a plumed body and surrounded with a sweet existence exempt from sorrows! The keen-edged sword, that cleaves in sunder, is waiting for me.

Chor. Whence rush on thee thine inspired, unmeaning fits of grief, whereunto thou givest lyric utterance in shrill and terrifying strains with an evil-omened cry? What power hath ordained the limits of thy prophetic pathway, ever moving amidst baleful sounds?

Cass. Oh Paris! what a marriage was thine! It hath destroyed thy kin. Oh waters of Scamander, whereof our fathers drank! On thy shore, thou winding stream, I grew up to womanhood, unhappy that I was! But now meseemeth I shall soon chant my prophecies by Cocytus and the banks of Acheron.

Chor. What hast thou now uttered? That is clearly said. A child, that heard it, might understand. And I am stricken as with a death-pang at thy grievous

woe, whereof thou tellest in warbled notes. My heart is crushed on hearing thee.

Cass. O my city, utterly destroyed! Alas for thy distress! Dear father! how many poor victims, from the grazing flock, thou didst kill in sacrifice before the walls! Yet they have not availed to save Troy from her destruction. And as for me, my fevered spirit shall soon lie low [37].

Leader of Chor. Therein thou speakest consistently. Some malign heavenly power with rude assault constrains thee to phrase melodiously thy lamentable deathful lot. But, for the final issue, that is dark to me.

Cass. No longer, then, like a bride in her first married hours, mine oracles shall peep from behind a veil, but with open vehemence, like a storm-wind, they shall meet the rising day, and dash against the light the billows of a calamity far more terrible. I will instruct you, this time, in no riddling wise. And ye shall bear me witness how closely I follow and scent out the track of troublous things enacted of old. Yonder house is haunted by a band that never leaves it, a choir that sing in unison indeed, but harshly, for their song is not of blessing. Lo, emboldened with draughts of human blood, that revel-rout of Furies inborn in the race, abide within there, not to be exorcised. Fast clinging to the mansion, they hymn the primordial crime;—then, by and by, they chant abhorrence of the bed that still resents the outrage done by a brother. Say, missed I there? Or like

a true archer, did I hit the mark? Am I nothing but a babbling false-prophetess, pestering people's doors? Bear me witness on your oath that I am acquainted with sins of yonder dwelling that are old in story.

Leader of Chor. How should an oath, how nobly soever framed, avail for remedy? Yet do I marvel that thou, brought up, as thou wert, beyond the sea, shouldst accurately tell the tale of a city strange to thee, as if thou hadst been present at the scene.

Cass. Apollo, Prophet that he is, appointed me to this.

Chor. Was it that, although a God, he had been smitten with love?

Cass. In former days I should have blushed to speak of that.

Chor. Ay, the mind is ever more delicate in prosperity.

Cass. A wrestler for my heart, he breathed with kindness towards me.

Chor. And came ye to the consummation of your loves?

Cass. I plighted my faith to Loxias and disappointed him.

Chor. When already overtaken by the spirit of prophecy?

Cass. Already I foretold to my fellow-citizens all that has befallen them.

Chor. Thou couldst not surely then escape from the anger of Apollo?

Cass. From the moment when I so offended, no man believed me.

Chor. To us thy soothsaying seems to deserve belief.

Cass. Oh horrible! Again the terrible travail of true prophecy whirls me round, and dizzies me with irresistible promptings. Oh what affliction! Behold ye those young things that crouch on the palace-roof? —pale dreamlike forms, children slain as by their kindred, their hands filled with meat of their own flesh, seen manifestly, their vitals and their inward parts, whereof their father tasted! For this, I say, there is one who is plotting recompense, a craven lion, rolling him upon the couch he kept warm for him who now is come, my master.—Ah me! the captive must bear the yoke.—Commander of the fleet, destroyer of Ilium, he yet is unaware with what wicked triumph the hateful creature yonder, like a lurking Até, will follow up her long speech of beaming welcome. Such a crime she dares. A woman, she is the slayer of the man. To what execrable monster shall I with truth compare her? To some Amphisbaena or some Scylla, dwelling among rocks, a bane to mariners, breathing truceless hostility to those she ought to hold most dear[38]? Dauntless in crime, she raised an exultant shout as men do that have turned the battle, pretending to rejoice in his safe home-coming. Ye may believe anything of this, or nothing. It makes no difference. What is to come will come, and thou, beholding it, wilt pity me and say I was too true a prophetess.

Chor. The banquet of Thyestes upon his children's flesh I understood, and shuddered at it. Amazement held me when I heard it described, not in shadowy outline, but with vivid truth; but in listening to the remainder of thy tale I am utterly bewildered.

Cass. I tell thee, thou shalt behold the death of Agamemnon.

Chor. Hush! wretched one, compose thy lips to silence.

Cass. No healing God presides over my present saying.

Chor. Were it accomplished,—no! But may it never come to pass!

Cass. Thou sayst thy prayers, while killing is the business yonder.

Chor. What man is perpetrating such an accursed crime?

Cass. My prophecy is indeed dark to you.

Chor. I cannot surmise how any one should be found to do it.

Cass. Yet I have learned Greek parlance all too well.

Chor. So hath the Pythian oracle, but it is obscure nevertheless.

Cass. Oh the pain! How this fire burns! It comes upon me. Woe, woe! Lyceaian Apollo! Woe, woe is me! This biped lioness, cohabiting with a wolf in the absence of the royal lion, shall kill me, unhappy that I am. In the potion of revenge which she prepares, I

too am thought of, and thrown in: she is resolved to boast that in whetting the sword against her lord, she has wreaked moreover, in our blood, his bringing of me. Why then do I retain these mockeries of my life, this prophetic wand, these fillets round my neck? Thee [39] I will break, before I myself am broken; go to destruction with you, I shall soon follow. Endow some other wretch, I have done with you. See now, Apollo himself is divesting me of this prophetic raiment! Thou didst behold me, how cruelly I was mocked, in this attire, together with my friend, by those who were alike our enemies, all idly; as if a beggar-priestess, I bore to be called a vagrant,—poor, wretched, famished creature that I was [40]! And now the prophet, disrobing me, his prophetess, leads me forth to this doom of dreadful death. In place of standing by my father's altar, the block awaits me, whereon, being stricken, my warm life-blood will make the sacrifice complete[41]. But in our death we shall not be without divinely given honours. We too have our Avenger,—the matricidal offspring that is destined to requite his father's murderers. A wandering exile, estranged from this land, he shall return and add the corner-stone to this edifice of family disaster. A mighty oath has been sworn in Heaven, that his father's fall shall beckon him home again. Why then am I thus given up to sorrow and crying, since first I saw the city of Ilium brought so low, and now her conquerors sink under divine judgement? I will go forward and shrink not. I will dare to die. The gate of Hades is before me,

and I bid it hail! I pray moreover that I may receive a mortal wound, that with no struggling, amid the death-stream of a painless end, I may close these eyes.

Chor. Unhappy, inspired damsel, thou hast spoken much. But how is it, if of a truth thou art aware of thine own imminent doom, that like a God-led heifer thou marchest fearlessly to the sacrifice?

Cass. Oh strangers, there is no more evading it: the time is at hand.

Chor. But the latest moment is evermore pre- 1300
ferred[42].

Cass. The hour for this is come. Avoidance will avail me little.

Chor. Assuredly, thou bravest misery with a courageous heart.

Cass. None but the wretched are so praised.

Chor. Yet a mortal life is graced by dying nobly.

Cass. Oh my Father, woe is me for thee! and for thy noble sons!

[*She approaches the palace, then comes forward again.*

Chor. How now! what is thy fear? Why dost thou turn away?

Cass. Woe, woe!

Chor. What makes thee so cry out—some inward or soul-felt horror?

Cass. The halls are breathing forth a dew of dripping gore.

Chor. Nay, nay; it is only the savour of household 1310
sacrifices.

Cass. I distinguish there an exhalation as from a tomb.

Chor. Thou tellest not of a hall perfumed with Syrian odours.

Cass. Yet will I go within to bewail my own and Agamemnon's destiny. I have had enough of life. Oh friends, mine is no vain misdoubting, as of a bird before a bush. Bear me this witness after I am dead, when for my woman's life a woman's life shall be taken, and for the man, whose wife was evil to him, a man shall fall. I appeal to your kind thoughts herein as one who is about to die.

Chor. Oh hapless one, we pity thee for thy prophetically spoken doom.

Cass. One more utterance, one more lament over myself! I pray to the sun, now last beheld by me, that my hateful murderers may pay my avengers for me also, the butchered captive, easily overcome. [*Exit.*

Chor. Alas for poor mortality! When careering prosperously a shadow may turn it back, and if once unfortunate, a wet sponge thrown blurs out the picture. This moves my pity more than all.

Leader of Chor. Great Fortune never satisfies the prosperous man; nor while others point the finger at his halls will he dismiss her thence, renouncing her, and saying, 'Come in no more.' To Agamemnon here the blessed ones have given it to vanquish Priam's city. Honoured of the Gods, he returns home. But if he must now pay with his blood for former blood-shedding, and by his death complete the recompense

for other deaths to those who suffered them, what mortal man who hears of it shall have confidence that a scathless lot accompanied his birth?

AGAM. (*within*). Oh me! I am wounded mortally within here[43].

CHOR. Hush! who is it that cried so? Wounded! and mortally!

AGAM. (*within*). Oh me! again—a second wound!

CHOR. It is the King who cries. Methinks the deed is done. Come, let us take counsel together as securely as we may.

CHOR. 1. I tell you at once what I propose:—That we make proclamation to the citizens to bring rescue to the palace hither.

2. Nay, but hear me. Let us immediately break within and detect the deed while the sword yet runs with blood.

3. I too share that counsel in a general way, and vote for action; it is high time something were done.

4. Can ye not see? This prelude means that some are preparing to rear the standard of tyranny in our state.

5. We are losing time, whilst they, alert and energetic, are trampling down the pride of our procrastination.

6. I know not how to hit on a helpful course. We have to form our plans about what is already in act[44].

7. I am of that way of thinking too; debate it as ye will, I find it a hard matter by such means to restore the dead.

8. But are we really thus to bow down in life-long bondage to their supremacy, who have disgraced the royal home?

9. Nay, that were unendurable; better die at once. Death is a milder lot than subjection to a tyrant's will.

10. But are the cries we heard sufficient warrant for the guess that he is actually gone?

11. Ere we give way to anger let us know clearly. Conjecture and clear knowledge are different things.

12. The sum of your votes empowers me to confirm this as the prevailing counsel, that we know thoroughly of the son of Atreus, how it goes with him.

[*The Chorus-leader, followed by the members of the Chorus, is cautiously advancing towards the palace-gate, when* CLYTEMNESTRA *is suddenly discovered on the Ekkyclema. The bath with the corpse of* AGAMEMNON, *covered with the purple web, is beside her; the corpse of* CASSANDRA *is visible in the background.*

CLYT. I spake much heretofore to fit the momentary need, and now in speaking contrary I shall feel no shame. Else how should any one, in carrying out schemes of enmity against an enemy who is called a friend, make close the net of disaster to a height that defies overleaping? This encounter, long since meditated by me, as I dwelt upon that ancient feud, came round in the slow course of time. I smote him here, where now I stand over my accomplished deed. This

too I will confess; I so contrived it that he could neither escape me nor resist his doom. I set around, with baffling intricacies like a fisher's net, an evil wealth of hangings. Twice there I smote him: twice he groaned, and his limbs gave way. And when he was down, I added a third blow, a prayerful offering to subterranean Zeus, safe keeper of the dead. So fallen, he gave forth his spirit, and gasping hard as he bled, he drenched me with a dark drizzle of gory dew, that gladdened me no less than the cornfield is gladdened by the rain from Heaven when the ear is filling. This being so, ye elders of Argos here, rejoice, if ye be so minded! For my part, I exult. Yea, were it ever seemly to pour libation over a human victim, in this case it were more than righteous. So heinous was the crime against household peace wherewith he charged the cup of cursing in his home, that now he hath drained on his return.

Chor. We marvel at thy speech and the boldness of thy tongue; that thou shouldst make this hideous boast over thy husband.

Clyt. Ye taunt me, as a woman void of counsel. But I say it fearlessly, to you who know the truth,—and whether ye choose to blame or praise me it is all one: —Here is Agamemnon, my husband! a dead body, the work of this right arm, a righteous worker. That is so.

Chor. Woman, what poison hast thou taken,—solid of the nourishing earth, or liquid from the briny flood, —that thou hast made thine own this horrid sacrifice, bringing the people's loud curse on thee? Didst thou

cast him off? didst thou sever him from life? Thou shalt be outcast, hated mightily of the citizens here.

CLYT. Your present sentence is that I must be an exile; that the people's curse and the citizens' hate shall follow me. *You* give that judgement, who in the former time had nought to say against *him*, when in gaiety of heart, as one might sacrifice a sheep or goat, one of thousands teeming in the fleecy fold, he gave to the death his own child, the precious travail of my womb, to charm away a Thracian wind. Should ye not have proclaimed him an exile in recompense for that abomination—ye from whom the avowal of my deed provokes so harsh a verdict? I bid you in your threatenings to know that I am prepared, if ye conquer with a strong hand, to be ruled by you. But should the contrary issue be determined by the power of God, ye shall be taught, at least in that last hour, the lesson of humility.

CHOR. Thy mood is lofty and thy speech rings proudly. As thy spirit raves over its blood-stained success, so that thine eyes shine, as if anointed with gore, even so one day, dishonoured and friendless, thou art doomed to expiate stroke with stroke.

CLYT. Hear this my solemn oath moreover. By Justice, who so signally hath vindicated my child—by Até and Erinys, to whom I sacrificed this man—I look not to inhabit halls of fear, so long as fire upon my hearth is kindled by Aegisthus, loyal as heretofore in his love to me. He is my shield of confidence, my strong defender. Low lies the wronger of my life, the

darling of priests' daughters in the leaguer of Troy. And together with him this his captive, this woman-seer, his bedfellow and faithful mistress, this prophetess that beside him pressed the planks on ship-board! They are not baulked of their deserving. He died as I have told you; she, swan-like, having chanted her last, her dying song, lies there,—his lover, whom he brought as a luxurious side-dish and set-off to my proud marriage-bed.

Chor. Ah! would that our fate might find us swiftly, without excessive pain or lingering disease, and bring to comfort us the everlasting sleep, since he, our most gentle guardian, is subdued. For a woman's sake he endured those many toils, and now at a woman's hand he hath expired. Oh infatuate Helen, that singly didst destroy those lives innumerable in the Trojan land, now thou hast caused to bloom beyond the rest a stain of blood indelible, an endless memorial of the strife whose foundations lay deep within the house, to a husband's bitter cost.

Clyt. Pray not for death in thy horror at this act, nor turn thy wrath on Helen, averring that she, the man-destroyer, after singly causing death to many Danaï, hath been the author of an intolerable grief.

Chor. O Genius, that dost oppress the Palace and the twofold race[45] of Tantalus' line! Thou wieldest to my keen sorrow a manlike spirit in female mould. Like a hateful raven she stands there over the corpse, and with harsh and boastful notes chants forth her strain.

CLYT. Now thou directest aright the meaning of thy tongue, naming as thou dost the trebly overgrown Genius of this race. The blood-lapping lust still gathering at its core is nursed by him. Ere the pain of the old wound ceases, blood breaks out afresh.

CHOR. Thou tellest of a mighty power, whose wrath is dangerous, haunting this house; an evil tale, alas! of checkless disaster. Ah! woe! It is the work of Zeus, the author and effecter of all. What mortal business is accomplished and he hath not done it? Which of these events is not determined by Divine Power?

My king! oh my king! How shall I lament thee? What shall I utter from an affectionate mind? Thou liest there in the toils of the spider, expiring, impiously slain; thus far from honour, subdued by violence with the edge of the sword.

CLYT. Thou declarest this to be my deed, but add not thereunto that I am the wedded wife of Agamemnon. Taking the likeness of the dead man's Queen, the ancient cruel spirit of revenge for the act of Atreus in providing that dire banquet, hath paid back this full-grown corpse in sacrifice over children slain.

CHOR. That thou art guiltless of this deed of death, who will bear thee witness? How should that be? Some vengeful spirit, provoked by his sire, might indeed be thine abettor herein. The power of dark strife presses onward, accompanied with fresh streams of kindred blood, advancing to the point where he shall make full requital for the clotted horror of that unnatural meal.

My king! oh my king! How shall I lament thee? What shall I utter from an affectionate mind? Thou liest there in the toils of the spider, expiring, impiously slain; thus far from honour, subdued by violence with the edge of the sword.

Clyt. From honour, sayest thou? I think otherwise[46]. Had *he* not contrived a guileful disaster for the home? Nay, for what he did to Iphigeneia, much wept for, his own fair sapling reared from me, receiving worthy recompense, let him not vent high words in Hades, since the sword that slew him only repaid him his own deed.

Chor. I falter, bereft of thought, and know not where to find a practicable way. The house is tottering. The pelting blood-storm, sapping the foundations, affrights me with its noise. The drizzling rain is done. Fate now is whetting Justice[47] on a new whetstone for fresh deeds of bane.

O Earth, O Earth, would thou hadst received me in, ere mine eyes beheld him occupying his low bed in the deep silver bath-vessel! Who shall bury him? who shall sing his dirge? Wilt thou have courage, after slaying thine own man, to mourn for him, fulfilling wrongfully a wretched recompense for this unhappy deed? Who, labouring in sincerity of mind, shall rightly direct words of praise over his tomb, to honour the immortal man?

Clyt. To care for that belongs not to thee. At my hand he fell, he died; and I will bury him, with no accompaniment of household lamentation; but

Iphigeneia, his daughter, as is meet, warmly welcoming her sire, at the further shore of the quickly crossed river of lamentation, shall fling her arms about him with a loving kiss.

Chor. Reproach there meets reproach; judgement is baffled. The spoiler is spoiled; the slayer is slain. Yet this remains while Zeus continues upon his throne: —He who doeth must suffer. That is a firm decree. Who then may extinguish the seed of curses within the home? The race is welded to misfortune.

Clyt. You now speak oracularly and with truth. Howbeit I would compound with the Genius of the race of Pleisthenes [48], here making oath that I am willing to acquiesce in what has been, however hard; only henceforth let him leave this mansion and plague some other family with the pollution of kindred deaths. A scanty share of wealth will satisfy me, if I have rid the palace of the madness of reciprocal slaughter.

Enter Aegisthus. Clytemnestra *remains in the background.*

Aegisthus. Hail, kindly light of the day of retribution! Now I am ready to confess that Gods survey from above the griefs of the earth, and care to vindicate mortals; since to my wish I see lying in the Furies' woven coils, this man, in requital for his father's guileful deeds. Atreus, his father, holding the sovereignty of this land, had banished Thyestes, my father and his brother—to put it clearly, his rival in power,—and made him an outcast from his city and his home.

Thyestes, hapless man, came back, and as a suppliant at the hearth, obtained security from immediate danger. His life was spared, so that his blood might not defile the ground of his father's dwelling-place. But in celebrating his return, with more zeal than kindness, Atreus, the wicked father of this dead man, professing to hold a sacrificial festival, set before my father a feast of his own children's flesh. The parts about the feet, and the hands, with the finger-nails, he kept under cover, where he sat apart in the highest place; and as the meat lacked these tokens[49], my sire unhesitatingly took it and ate—a meal of ruinous consequences, as thou seest, to his posterity. Thereafter, when he came to know what abomination had been wrought, he raised a lamentable cry, and fell backward, vomiting the murdered flesh:—then prayed for the Pelopidae a crushing doom, as with the act of spurning that supper from him, he joined a solemn curse, that in like manner the whole posterity of Pleisthenes might fall down. Thereof thou mayst behold the sequel in the death of him who now lies here. Who then could have a better right than I had to contrive this deed of blood? I was my father's thirteenth child, and, being an infant in arms, I was driven forth by Atreus together with him: but, notwithstanding, I was reared to manhood, and Justice restored me to my land. And although yet a stranger to the palace, I laid my grasp upon the King, by knitting the whole framework of this plan of enmity. This being so, I could even welcome death, since I behold him in the toils of retribution.

CHOR. Aegisthus, I have no respect for the man who insults the unfortunate. Thou avowest, dost thou, to have deliberately caused his death, alone to have plotted this pity-moving crime? I warn thee, thou shalt have thy due. Thou shalt not save thy head from the people's curses, enforced by stoning.

AEGIST. Dost thou thus lift up thy voice—thou, sitting at the nethermost oar, while the spear is wielded by those on the top benches? Thou shalt find, old sir, how grievous at your age it is to be taught obedience. Prison-bonds, and pangs of hunger, combined with old age, have a marvellous mystic power to heal perverseness. Are thine eyes not opened as thou lookest on this? Kick not against the goad, lest pricking give thee pain.

CHOR. (*to* CLYT.). Woman! was this thy faithfulness to those newly returned from war? Entrusted with the home, didst thou at once defile thy husband's bed, and plot this murder against him, the army's lord?

[CLYTEMNESTRA *remains silent.*

AEGIST. That speech, too, is the first parent of sorrow. Your voice has the contrary effect to that of Orpheus. His utterance drew all after him with delight. But thou, with thy foolish bark, provoking anger, art like to be dragged away. Howbeit, when once conquered, thou wilt show thyself more mild.

CHOR. Dost thou dream, forsooth, to lord it over Argive men, who, when thou hadst plotted this man's death, hadst not the courage thyself to do the murder?

AEGIST. Craft clearly was the woman's part. I was

sure to be suspected as his ancestral enemy. However that may be, the treasures that were his shall now enable me to govern Argos; and any citizen who refuses homage I will bind with a heavy yoke, not handling him as my high-mettled corn-fed trace-horse. Hunger, that dwells with darkness (horrid comradeship!) shall visit him, and find him meek.

CHOR. But why did thy coward soul withhold thee from murdering him with thine own hand? instead whereof, a woman, thine accomplice, slew him, to the pollution of Argolis and the desecration of the Argive deities! Ah! somewhere, let us hope, Orestes sees the light, that with auspicious fortune he may return, and prove the unconquerable executioner of this pair!

AEGIST. Well! since that is your line of action and of talk, ye shall soon find—— Come, friends of my guard, here is work for you. [*Enter bodyguard.*

LEADER OF CHOR. (*to members of Chorus*). Come each and all, make you ready, hand on sword.

AEGIST. I, too, sword in hand, am ready to dare you to the death.

LEADER OF CHOR. To the death! We accept the omen; here we take our fortune.

CLYT. (*coming forward*). Nay! not so, dearest. Let us not, I pray thee, commence another act of harm. The ingathering of what is done is, in many ways, a heavy harvest-home. Disaster enough is here; let us have no bloodshed. Go thou,—and begone, ye old men, to your appointed places[50], ere ye suffer the consequence of some rash act. As we have done this, let it suffice

that thus it must be. If only this might prove enough of misery, we would accept it, wounded as we are disastrously with the malignity of Heaven[51]. So stands my woman's counsel, heed it whoso list.

AEGIST. Nay! to think that these men, tempting the Genius of the hour, should err from modest judgment and break forth in idle reproaches, assailing me with words, in violation of authority.

CHOR. It would ill beseem Argive citizens to fawn on villainy.

AEGIST. I shall visit thee for this in days to come.

CHOR. Thy days to come shall not be many, if but Heaven speed Orestes hitherward.

AEGIST. I know that hope is the exile's daily food.

CHOR. Act it out, since thou mayest! Pollute justice, and grow great.

AEGIST. I tell thee, thou shalt pay me richly for this folly.

CHOR. Ay, boast and fear not. The cock is valiant in presence of the hen.

CLYT. Care not thou for their idle noise! Thou and I, ruling this house together with supreme authority, will make all well.

THE CHOËPHOROE

OR

LIBATION-BEARERS

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

ORESTES.

PYLADES.

CHORUS of Trojan Captives.

ELECTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

NURSE OF ORESTES.

AEGISTHUS.

SERVANT OF AEGISTHUS.

ATTENDANTS.

SCENE: *Argos:—*

A. *Before the tomb of Agamemnon:—*

B. *In front of the Palace of the Pelopidae.*

Statues of HERMES *and* APOLLO PYTHIUS *are in the foreground.*

THE CHOËPHOROE

OR

LIBATION-BEARERS

SCENE A. *The burial-ground of the Pelopidae: before the tomb of Agamemnon.*

Enter ORESTES *and* PYLADES.

ORESTES. O Hermes of the lower world, who keepest watch over my father's sovereign rights[1], prove thou my Saviour, and give succour to me when I call on thee. For I am come into this land a returning exile. And at this mound of his tomb, I loudly summon my father, to listen, to hear me. . . . (*He cuts off two locks of hair.*)

This lock I give to Inachus, who nourished my infancy; and this I offer in token of mourning for the dead. (*He places a lock of hair upon the tomb.*) For I was not here, my father, to lament thy cruel death, nor to stretch forth my hand, assisting at thy obsequies.—

What is this which I behold? What assemblage of women is moving hitherward, distinguished with dark robes? What disaster am I to gather from this? Is the house afflicted again with some fresh sorrow? or

shall I be right in guessing that these women are carrying libations in honour of my father—an offering to appease the dead? That must be so; for I see that Electra too, my sister, comes on with them, conspicuous in her sad mourning garb. O Zeus! grant that I may revenge my father's death, and be thou my willing helper in the fight!—Come, Pylades, let us retire, that I may learn with certainty what female supplication is before us here.

[*They retire. The Chorus enter with* ELECTRA.

CHOR. I go from the palace, vehemently sent forth, to accompany this libation with sharp sounds of smiting hands. My cheek is glowing with crimson furrows, freshly ploughed thereon with lacerating nails, and throughout all my days my heart feeds on lamentation, while, by reason of my grief, the rending that destroys the linen woof resounds, as the folds of my raiment that enshroud my breast are stricken and torn, because of gloomy sorrows. For Panic unmistakable, making the hair to stand on end, dream-prophet of the palace, bursting with rage out of the midst of slumber, and assailing violently the women's chamber, raised a loud shout of terror, that issued from the royal closet at the dead of night. And the interpreters of this vision, being made responsible to Heaven, spake and said: 'Those beneath the ground are angrily dissatisfied, and cherish wrath against the murderers.' On such a graceless errand for the averting of ill (O mother Earth!) the god-hated Queen in her eagerness sends me forth. But I am afraid to utter such a message;

for what redemption is there when blood hath dropped upon the ground? O hearth, given up to sorrow! O house, that art doomed to destruction! Sunless gloom of human hatred[2] envelops the palace by reason of its master's death. The awe, that heretofore was irresistible, unsubdued, unassailable, as it penetrated the ears and mind of the whole people, is passing off, and fear is entering where there was no fear[3]. For mortals worship Prosperity as more than divine. But the stroke of Justice swiftly visits some who are still in light, while the punishment of others gathers slowly in the glimmering twilight. Others night overtakes with their destiny incomplete.

Because of blood once drained by Earth that nourished it, the stain of blood that cries for vengeance stands fast and will not pass away. Disaster with soul-piercing pain tears him to pieces who caused the outbreak of the far-raging malady. He who hath once assayed to break into the bridal chamber can find no remedy, and all rivers united in one current to dilute the stain of murder on the hand would spend their cleansing power in vain. Howbeit, since the Gods brought an irresistible fate to surround our city, and I was taken from my father's house into captivity, I, living thus under control, am bound to approve of righteous and unrighteous courses, in spite of my own thoughts, and to overcome the bitter abhorrence of my spirit. Meanwhile I weep covertly beneath my veil, frozen at heart with secret sorrows, for my master's fall that is unavenged.

ELECTRA. Ye captive women, who attend to household cares, since ye are here to guide me in this act of supplication, advise me how I must proceed. In shedding on the grave this libation to the dead, how shall my words be loyal? what prayer must I address to my father? Shall I say that I bring this offering to a dear husband from an affectionate wife, meaning from my mother? I have not confidence for that, nor know I how to speak in pouring out this draught upon my father's grave. Or shall I utter the customary prayer, that he will make a due return to those who send these funeral honours—meaning some gift that suits with their ill-desert? Or, after pouring it,—in silence and dishonour, as my father fell,—for the earth to drink it up, shall I depart, like one who carries refuse out, throwing the vessel behind me, and turning not again to look. Be sharers with me in this deliberation, O my friends! We are sharers of a common spirit of hatred in the palace yonder. Hide not your thought within your hearts from fear of any one. The same destined hour awaits both the freeman and him who lives in subjection to a master's will. Speak on, if ye have aught to offer that is left unsaid.

CHOR. I will speak at thy bidding, as my heart prompts me; reverencing, as if it were an altar, thy father's tomb.

ELECT. Say on, then, as thou dost revere my father's burial-place.

CHOR. As thou pourest the libation, utter words to which loyal hearts may listen with respect.

ELECT. What friends are they, whom I may describe as loyal?

CHOR. Thyself, first of all, and every hater of Aegisthus.

ELECT. Then I am to pray thus for myself and for you?

CHOR. Think with thyself and understand, and then say.

ELECT. Whom am I to add besides to this our faction?

CHOR. Forget not Orestes, though he be away from home.

ELECT. That is well said. Thou hast heartened me with thy counsel not a little.

CHOR. Now then, forgetting not the murder, pray that the murderers——

ELECT. What! Instruct my inexperience and dictate to me.

CHOR. That there may come upon them some divine power or some mortal hand——

ELECT. Shall I say to judge? or to execute justice?

CHOR. Say, in plain language, to kill them in requital.

ELECT. Will not the Gods regard such words as impious in me?

CHOR. How impious?—to recompense an enemy with evil! [ELECTRA *approaches the grave.*

ELECT. O Hermes of the lower world, most mighty Herald both to the living and the dead, aid me by proclaiming this on my behalf:—That the powers beneath the earth should hear my prayers, which have regard to my own father's murder, and that the Earth herself should hear them,—Earth, who brings all things forth

from her womb, and rears them, and again receiveth seed from her own offspring. I too, in duly pouring this lustral offering, say thus, appealing to my father: —'Have pity upon me, and provide some way for us to bring our dear Orestes home; for, as it is, we are homeless, outcast, and sold away by our own mother, who as our price hath taken, to be her master, Aegisthus, her accomplice in thy murder. My life is that of a slave. Orestes is exiled from his patrimony, while they indulge their pride, luxuriating in thy calamity'[4]. My prayer to thee,—hear it, O my father!—is that Orestes may come with happy fortune hither. And grant to me myself that my life may be far more pure than my mother's, and my hands more righteous.

These prayers are on our part. As for our adversaries, I pray that thy avenger, O my father, may appear to them, and that thy murderers may die a death of righteous retribution. This evil prayer for them interrupts the tenor of my holy prayer. Be it thine to send us blessings from where thou art below, attended with heavenly aid, and with the power of Earth, and with Righteousness conferring victory.

These prayers I follow up with this libation, which it behoves you now to adorn with dirges due:—chanting in honour of him who is dead your auspicious hymn.

Chor. Break silence[5], as ye send forth the tear to perish over our perished lord, since at this fortress, where good and evil are alike secure[6], the libation has been poured out, to avert the horror against which we

pray. Hear thou my reverent speech; hear it, O our master, in thy shadowy mind!

Oh! woe, woe! Where is the mighty man of war to redeem the house—a War-god that shall come brandishing in his hand the bended Scythian bow in action, and wielding the weapon for close combat grasped by the hilt?

[*While they are singing,* ELECTRA *sees the lock of hair and takes it up. She now comes forward, holding it.*

ELECT. My father hath now received the libation which the Earth has drained. But I would have you share with me in a strange new matter which I have to tell.

CHOR. Speak on. My heart is bounding with sudden alarm.

ELECT. I saw this curl of cut hair lying on the tomb.

CHOR. Cut from whose head? A man's, or a deep-zoned maid's?

ELECT. There is no mystery in that. Any one may guess so much.

CHOR. Let my age, then, be instructed by your youth.

ELECT. Who is there, unless I myself, who could have offered it?

CHOR. True! Those to whom else it might belong to offer mourning locks are enemies.

ELECT. Well! this glossy curl is very like——

CHOR. To whose hair? That is what I desire to know.

ELECT. Most like to mine, if you compare them.

CHOR. Could this then possibly be Orestes' gift in secret?

ELECT. It most certainly has the look of his luxuriant hair.

CHOR. But how could he have dared to advance hitherward?

ELECT. He has sent this mourning token to grace his father's grave.

CHOR. That idea relieves us not from weeping, if we are to think that he shall never set foot in Argolis.

ELECT. I, too, have surging at my heart a sea of bitterness, and am smitten as with a hostile weapon; and from mine eyes are falling, not to be repressed, hot tears in a stormy shower, when I look upon this curl. How could I imagine that any other Argive could possess this hair? Yet surely she that slew my father could not offer it, my mother, the mistress of an impious mind towards her children, unworthy of the name of mother. I know not how, indeed, I should absolutely affirm that this ornament had graced the head of Orestes, dearest of the world to me. But the hope thrills me. Ah! would that, like a human messenger, it had a kindly voice! For then I should not be thus shaken to and fro with divers thoughts;—but it would have clearly told me either to reject this lock as having been cut from a hateful head, or as my brother's it might have sorrowed with me, and so have adorned this tomb, and done honour to our dear father.

I call the Gods to witness, for well they know, in

what a tempest we like mariners are buffeted, yet if Fate willed that we should obtain salvation, there may yet arise from a little seed the stem of a strong tree. But see! there is a second proof. The traces of footsteps here are commensurate and like to mine. Moreover, there are two of them, outlines of different feet, —his own, and some companion's of his journey. The heel-marks and impress of the ball of the foot, when measured, agree perfectly with my footprints. But I am travailing inwardly, and my heart is torn asunder.

OREST. (*advancing*). Ere thou conclude thy supplication, announce to the Gods that thy prayers so far have been fulfilled. Then pray that what ensues may be likewise fortunate.

ELECT. Why? What have I just obtained by the grace of Heaven?

OREST. Thou hast arrived at seeing one whom thou hast long been praying to see.

ELECT. On whose name, I pray thee, art thou aware that I have been calling?

OREST. I am well aware that Orestes' name has been much magnified by thee.

ELECT. And wherein then have I fulfilment of my prayers?

OREST. I am Orestes, and am here. Seek not for any dearer to thee.

ELECT. How, stranger? Is this some snare thou art contriving for me?

OREST. I should then be weaving a net for my own feet.

ELECT. Nay, but thou dost choose to mock at my misfortunes.

ORREST. If I do, I mock at my own likewise.

ELECT. Am I then to speak to thee as very Orestes?

ORREST. You find it hard to know me when you see myself. Yet when you had seen this severed lock of mourning hair, and were scanning my footprints, you were all excitement, and imagined that you saw me there. Set the curl in the place whence it was taken and consider it. It is a curl from thy brother's head, that seemed conformable to those on thy own brow. And look upon this cloth which thou didst weave. Observe the closeness of the weft, and the shapes embroidered on it. —— Contain thyself. Be not beside thyself with joy! We know of one too near to us, whom we have much cause to fear.

ELECT. O dearest object of care to thy father's house, much-wept-for hope of a seed that should not perish, relying on thy valour thou shalt win back thy father's hall. Delight of mine eyes! thou hast a fourfold part in me. For I must call thee 'Father,' and the strain of love in me that should have been my mother's is all thine—since she is utterly abhorred: and the affection that belonged to our sister, so cruelly sacrificed, that too is thine. And all the while thou art my true brother, whom I revere. Only may Victory and Right be on thy side, together with him,—third named, but highest in power,—the Saviour, Zeus!

ORREST. O Zeus, let thine eye behold what is passing here! Look upon the orphaned brood of the eagle-

sire, who was entangled and slain in the coils of the deadly serpent. They in their bereavement are famished with hunger: for they are not yet full-grown, so as to bring home to the eyrie their hereditary prey. Even so thou mayst behold me and Electra here, a fatherless offspring, both equally outcast from our native home. And if thou sufferest to perish these younglings of him who sacrificed to thee and honoured thee so highly, whence shalt thou have hereafter the prize of rich banquets from a like liberal hand? If thou lettest thine eagle's race be brought to nought, thou canst no more send forth the tokens which overawe mankind;—and if this stem of sovereignty should be withered utterly away, thine altars will not have the support it renders to them on sacrificial days. If thou wilt tend it, thou shalt raise from lowness to an exalted state a family which now seems quite to have fallen.

Chor. O children, O restorers of your father's hearth,—dear children, speak not aloud, lest some one overhear you, and with a wanton tongue report all that you are saying to those in power. May I some day behold them expiring amidst the pitchy ooze of conflagration!

Orest. Most certainly the mighty oracle of Loxias will not fail me, that hath bidden me to carry this adventure through, adding loud denunciation and menace of stormy troubles to vex my living soul, should I not visit those guilty of my father's death; declaring that I must slay them in requital after the

same manner, being stung to frenzy by the wrong of confiscation. And he said that I, myself, should pay for this in my own spirit, and should suffer many dark afflictions.

For he proclaimed it to the world, that the ground should give forth such produce as should comfort my
280 enemies, while diseases should be mine, climbing upon my flesh, to devour it cruelly, a cancer that should eat away its primal substance, and that my temples should grow grey under this trouble. And he spake of other assaults of the Erinyes, that should be accomplished in consequence of my father's murder,—clear-sighted evils that move their eyes even in darkness[7]. For the viewless shaft of the powers below that comes from suppliant souls of kinsmen unnaturally slain, and frenzy and vain fears in the night-time should shake
290 and harass me, and my body, with degrading marks from the brazen scourge, should be expelled from the city. A man so forbidden has no claim to share in the wine-bowl or the liquor of libation. And from the altars my father's invisible wrath should drive me off, and no man should receive me or share my lodging. Unhonoured of all men, and without a friend, I should die at length, shrivelled up with the misery of an utterly destroying fate.

Surely one is bound to rely on such an oracle as this; and though I did not rely on it, the act must still be performed. For many impulses coincide in one;
300 the God's commandment, my deep sorrow for my father, and withal the lack of substance forces me on

that I should not permit my fellow-citizens, the most famous of men, who by their glorious spirits made an end of Troy, to be thus subject to two women. For his heart is womanish; or, if otherwise, it will soon be evident.

CHOR. Then, O ye mighty Fates, ordain ye, that the end may come from Zeus even there, whither Righteousness is pursuing her way. I hear the shout of Justice exacting the debt:—'For words of hatred let hatred be the recompense, and for each deathful stroke let the striker be struck to death.' That he who does must suffer, is the utterance of an immemorial saying.

[*They all draw nearer to the grave.*

OREST. Father, whose end was terrible, by what deed or word of mine can I succeed in wafting from afar to where thou liest the light which countervaileth darkness[8]? But, whether or no, this kindness hath been loudly shown, this honorific dirge for Atreus' seed, who is the foremost of his house.

CHOR. Child, the flame's consuming jaws subdue not the spirit of the dead; his wrath becomes apparent afterward. When the cry is raised over him that dieth, the avenger shows his face. And though a father be reduced to dust[9], the righteous lamentation for him, immense in vehemence, searches out his cause completely.

ELECT. Hear now, O my father, my tearful mourning in my turn. Hearken to the dirge which both thy children raise, groaning about thy tomb. Thy burial-place receives us both, taking refuge there alike

as suppliants and as exiles. What happiness is there in all this? What else but woe? Will Calamity ever be overcome?

CHOR. A god, if he so will, may even out of this low state set up the occasion for more auspicious sounds. Instead of lamentation over a tomb, the hymn of gladness in the royal halls should accompany the newly welcomed friend [10].

OREST. Would that, O my sire, thou hadst been slain with a spear-wound from some Lycian before the walls of Troy! For then thou wouldst have left a glorious renown in thy hall, and having established, for thy children to walk in, a life admired of men, thou shouldst have occupied thy lofty barrow of earth beyond the sea, not burdensome to thy home.

CHOR. Dear to his friends who died nobly over there, he had been distinguished in the lower realm with high prerogative, as foremost amongst the ministers of the great Sovereigns there beneath. For in his lifetime he was indeed a king, fulfilling powerfully his destined place of command, and wielding a sceptre that was obeyed by men.

ELECT. I would not, father, have had thee buried beside Scamander-stream, or slain among those who fell in the war under the walls of Troy. Nay, ere it came to that, I would that his murderer had so fallen in some death-bringing doom, that we might have heard of it from far away, and never have known this affliction.

CHOR. Therein, daughter, thou hast uttered what

were better than golden, a piece of more than Hyperborean happiness. Thou mayest utter it! meanwhile there is lashing us this shrill and twofold scourge: The helpers of one faction are buried beneath, while the deeds of this hateful ruling faction are impure. And the younger generation find it more than ever so [11].

Orest. That pierces through mine ear, as if it were an arrow. O Zeus, thou sendest forth calamity in late requital for the ruthless wicked violence of men, and it shall be accomplished, though upon a parent.

Chor. May it be mine to raise the shrilling shout of exultation when the man is smitten and the woman's life is destroyed! Wherefore should I keep hidden what still is hovering at my heart? Which way I move, ever blowing at the prow there buffets me this tempest of keen indignation, this irremovable abhorrence.

Elect. Ay; when will Zeus, blessing both our young lives, bring down his hand (ah! woe!), cleaving their heads asunder? Would that faith were kept with our land! I require justice to be exacted from the unrighteous. Hear this, O Earth; hear it, worshipped powers below!

Chor. It is the everlasting rule that, when the death-drop falls to Earth, it demands more blood. Destruction calls aloud upon the Fury who brings down ever fresh calamity upon calamity sent forth by those formerly slain.

Orest. Woe! ye sovereigns of the nether world!

O mighty curses of the slain, behold and see this remnant of the house of Atreus in deep distress and humbled before their own palace-hall. O Zeus! which way are we to turn?

CHOR. Again my heart within me shudders when I hear that piteous cry, and then one while I am in despair, and my inmost core grows dark in listening to the strain; and then again, as I look on thy youthful might, my confidence returns and banishes that sense of sorrow, turning it to nought.

ELECT. What should we rightly speak of? should we utter the wrongs we have suffered at a mother's hand? Fawn on us as she may, the sore is open still. Like a wolf of savage heart, our anger is not to be soothed by our mother's caress.

CHOR. I mourned wildly in Persian-wise with beating of the breast, like a Cissian woman; my hands dealt blows, now here, now there, with closed fist, in quick succession, raised on high, and with the noise my wretched battered head was deafened.

ELECT. O mother, rife with enmity, shrinking from no crime, with funeral as of a foe thou couldst bury the Prince without his citizens, thy husband unlamented, without any mourning train.

OREST. All thou tellest me, alas! is full of shame. But for that despite to our father shall she not pay, by virtue of the Deities and by virtue of our right hands? Might I but once cut off those guilty ones, I could willingly die.

CHOR. Moreover I tell you this: he was mutilated;

and according to that treatment was her burial of him, determined as she was to make effectual a doom that should oppress your life with crushing power[12]. Thou knowest now the cruel dishonour done to thy father.

ELECT. Thou art instructed in thy father's death. But I the while was kept aloof as a thing of no esteem, and, shut away from the royal chambers[13], as if I were a mischievous hound, I gave forth tears that came more readily than laughter, pouring out in secret my sorrow with streams of weeping. Hear that, and let it be engraved upon thy heart!

CHOR. And through thine ears let our speech penetrate in consort with the quiet movement of thy mind. Part is as we have said; much else thine own spirit pants to know. And it behoves thee to enter the arena with thine ardour unallayed.

OREST. To thee I speak, my father; take part with thine own!

ELECT. I too, with weeping, unite in that supplication.

CHOR. And we, unanimously adopting the same cause, add our voices therewith. Come to the light, and give us thine aid. Be on our side, in coping with thine enemies.

OREST. Hostility closes with hostility, just claim with claim.

ELECT. Ye Gods! Give judgement in righteousness!

CHOR. A trembling steals on me as I listen to that prayer. The doom hath long been waiting. It will come in answer to your call.

Oh, inborn trouble of the race, O discordant deathful note struck by calamity! O lamentable intolerable cares! O sorrow not to be assuaged!

LEADER OF CHOR. Redress lies within the house, as lint lies within the wound; not to be procured from others abroad, but from yourselves, in satisfying cruel gory Strife. This hymn is addressed to the Gods below the ground.

CHOR. O blessed ones beneath, give ear to this supplication, and with zealous thoughts send to your children succour that shall end in victory.

OREST. O father, who wast slain in no kingly wise, give me, I pray thee, authority to rule thy mansion.

ELECT. I too, my father, beg thee in like manner, that I may wreak condign vengeance on Aegisthus[14].

OREST. So customary feasts in honour of thee shall be established in the land; but if thou wilt not do it, thou shalt find thyself, alone of the feastful dead, unhonoured with savour of burnt sacrifice.

ELECT. And I will bring forth from our paternal hall, of my own bridal portion, libations in thy honour on my day of marriage, and I will pay homage to this thy tomb before all else.

OREST. O Earth, release my father, that he may watch over this encounter!

ELECT. Persephone, grant to us victorious might!

OREST. My father, recollect the bath wherein thou wast cut off!

ELECT. Yea, call to mind how thou wast caught with a strange net!

Orest. Bound foot and hand, my father, with manacles not of brass!

Elect. And in a shroud of base contriving!

Orest. Is thy spirit roused with these reproaches, father?

Elect. And dost thou raise erect thy beloved head?

Orest. Either send forth Justice, to give succour to thy friends, or grant that they may have a like advantage in the struggle over thine enemies, if thou wouldst win victory in return for that wherewith thou wast subdued.

Elect. Hear, O my father, once more this last cry. Behold this brood of thine, here kneeling before thy tomb, and let their male and female voices, as they are blended in lamentation, move thy compassion.

Orest. Let not this seed of the Pelopidae be blotted out. For while they live, thou dost not perish even though slain.

Elect. For children are the preservatives of the dead man's name; they are like the corks that keep the net afloat, sustaining the flaxen cord in the deep sea.

Orest. Hear us! This piteous lamentation is on thy behalf: which if thou honourest, thou thyself art vindicated.

Chor. In truth, this long-protracted lament cannot be blamed, wherewith ye have worshipped at the grave hitherto unhonoured. But now for what remains, since thy soul has taken its full bent, be it thine to act, and prove what is the purpose of Destiny.

Orest. That shall be done. But it lies full in my

way to inquire,—For what cause sent she the libation? Moved by what circumstance did she seek, too late, to atone with these honours for an irrevocable wrong? It was a wretched grace that thus was offered to the unconscious dead,—I cannot conjecture why. In any case, it fell far short of her transgression. Libations, no matter how or when, poured in recompense for a single death, are labour in vain. That is the simple truth. But if you know and will explain this to me, I shall be glad.

CHOR. I know, my son, for I was present. It was in consequence of a dream, and a sudden fear in the night-time which had shaken her, that the impious woman sent this libation.

OREST. And did you hear the nature of the dream? Can you describe it clearly?

CHOR. She dreamt that she gave birth to a serpent; so she said.

OREST. And what is the end or issue of the tale?

CHOR. She said that she arranged it as an infant with swaddling-bands.

OREST. An infant—craving for what food,—the new-born monster?

CHOR. She herself gave it the breast in her dream.

OREST. Surely the dug could not fail to be wounded by the horrid thing?

CHOR. It was wounded so that the milk the creature drew was stained with blood.

OREST. That vision cannot be in vain.

CHOR. Moreover, in her alarm, she waked and cried

aloud ; and many torches that had gone out in darkness were rekindled in the house to please their mistress. Then, finally, she sends this funeral libation, looking therein for a desperate remedy against calamity.

Orest. I pray to the Argive earth and to my father's tomb that this dream may have its accomplishment regarding me. For I interpret it in a manner that fits perfectly. Surely if the snake, leaving the same place from whence I came forth, usurped my swaddling-bands and gaped about the dug wherefrom I was nurtured, and stained with blood the kindly milk, so that she in terror cried aloud for this disaster, it is fated for her, seeing that she hath nursed a monstrous portent, to die with violence ; and I, the grown serpent, am her destroyer. So much this dream declares. Howbeit (*to Leader of Chor.*), I make you my augurer concerning this.

Chor. May it prove even as you say ! Meanwhile give direction to your friends, what some must do, while others must remain inactive.

Orest. My directions are few and simple : first, that Electra here should go within ; then, I enjoin on these women that they should hide my plan, which I have arranged in such a way that those who slew by guile the honoured hero may be taken by guile in the very same snare and die, even as Loxias hath foretold it, our lord Apollo, whose prophecies have hitherto been found infallible. In the guise of a stranger, suitably accoutred, I will come with Pylades here before the courtyard gate in the character of a foreign

friend and ally. We shall both of us assume the speech of the Parnassian highlands, imitating the accent of the Phocian tongue; and so it will be, that, since the house is visited with a strange affliction, no one at the door will welcome us with cheerful greetings. But we shall linger there, till some one passing by shall wonderingly say:—'Wherefore doth Aegisthus, if indeed he is at home, and knows of this, keep the suppliant outside his doors?' At all events, if once I shall cross the threshold of the courtyard gate, and find him upon my father's seat, or should he come in afterwards, and for a moment stand before my face, appearing eye to eye, ere he shall have time to say, 'Whence are you?' I shall make him a corpse, having spitted him with a swift pass of my keen weapon.—The Erinys, not stinted of bloodshed, shall drink a third draught of unmingled gore[15]. Now therefore (*to* ELECTRA) do thou carefully watch over what goes on within, that this device may exactly answer its intention. And you I charge (*to* CHORUS), to bear a discreet tongue, keeping silence when you ought, and saying what befits the need. The rest I leave to His watchful care, whose presence I invoke, and whom I pray to direct and prosper my armed enterprise[16]. [*Exeunt* ORESTES, PYLADES, *and* ELECTRA.

CHOR. Earth nourishes an abundant brood of sad and terrible things, and the Deep enfolds in his embrace dangerous monsters innumerable. Also the fires from on high come near, and both winged creatures and those that walk the ground may tell of the angry vehemence of wind and storm. But who may express

the enormity of human pride, and the uncontrolled passion of daring woman-kind, joined with fatal infatuation ! The love of women turning to hate wrongfully prevails over household fellowship throughout the living world. Let him bear witness to this who is not frivolous in his thoughts, when he has learned the torch-kindling device, which the wretched daughter of Thestius contrived, when she burned to the end the ruddy brand whose being was exactly measured with her son's, from the moment when he left his mother's womb, and uttered his first cry, throughout his existence, until the day that should determine his fate. Let us utter our abhorrence of her too, Scylla, the cruel daughter, who, taking part with his enemies, destroyed one most dear to her, tempted thereunto by the Cretan necklace forged of gold, the gift of Minos. She severed from Nisus the lock of immortality—the heartless creature !—in his unsuspecting sleep; and Hermes overtook him.

Now since we have dwelt on harsh troubles,—calling to mind the loveless, ill-assorted spousal, which the house abominates, and the plottings of deep female thought,—(all reverence attaches to the armed warrior, the man whose anger is bent against his foes ; but let the domestic hearth be without such heat, if it is to win my worship,—let the female spirit shrink from violent acts[17]) :—Of troubles, I repeat, the Lemnian horror hath the chief place in story, a disaster at once lamented and abhorred :—each recurring terror of the world is likened to the Lemnian woe. Under such

God-abominated curse the race of mortals, lost to honour, withers away. For none reveres what the Gods hate.—Are not all my instances well chosen?

But there is a sword approaching the breast that woundeth piercingly with an unerring stroke, by the agency of Justice. For the sin of one who unlawfully transgresses against the sovereign majesty of Zeus is not trodden underfoot, but rises up for judgement. The anvil-block of Justice is firmly laid, and Fate is forging there the sword for execution. She leads the Son of Vengeance home, and the Erinys, of unfathomable thoughts, winning renown after long lapse of time, procures repayment of the guilt of former bloodshed.

Scene B. *Before the Palace-gate.*

Enter Orestes, *with* Pylades, *disguised.*

Orest. Ho, porter! answer when I knock thus at the outer door. Again I ask, porter! who is at home? Once more, the third time, I summon some one forth, if warlike Aegisthus keeps here a hospitable house.

Porter. O yes! I hear. What countryman are you? Whence are you come?

Orest. Announce me to those who are the masters here. To them I come, bringing strange tidings. And be quick, for Night's dark chariot is hastening, and it is time for travellers to drop anchor in some hospitable haven. Let some one with full authority come forth, —mistress if so be,—though master were more befitting; for then conversation is not obscured with shame-

fastness; man speaks with confidence to man, and declares his meaning unmistakably.

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLYT. Strangers, ye have only to declare your need. We have all that such a mansion should provide,—warm baths and soft-laid couches to soothe wearied limbs, and attendants who see only what they ought. Or if some matter of graver import waits decision, that is men's business, and we will call them in.

OREST. I come from beyond your border,—from Daulia in the Phocian country. And as I travelled, self-burdened with my own raiment, towards Argos, whither my feet were bound, a man whom I knew not and who knew not me encountered me and said, after telling me of his journey and asking me of mine:—He was Strophius of Phocis, as I learned in the course of our conversation:—'Since Argos is in any case your destination, stranger, bear this in mind, and report it faithfully to the parents of the man;—"Orestes is no more." Fail not, I beseech thee. And convey back their commands,—whether his friends shall determine to fetch him home, or to let him be buried in a strange land, evermore and entirely an alien. As it is now, the sides of a brazen vase contain the ashes of one to whom mourning rites have been duly paid.'

I give the message as I received it. But I am not sure (*looking at* CLYT.) if I am speaking to those who have the best right to hear. His parents ought to be informed.

CLYT. Ah me! you tell us that our ruin is complete.

O curse upon this mansion, hard to overcome! How much that seemed carefully laid out of thy way thou hast notwithstanding visited, subduing them from far with thine unerring shafts! All-hapless that I am, thou art bereaving me of all that I held dear. Orestes now had providently withdrawn his foot from the slough of destruction. But to-day this only hope we had for remedying the furious revelry that possessed our hall, comes home with you and is annihilated [18].

OREST. It would have pleased me better to have made the acquaintance of such prosperous friends, as a bringer of good tidings; for what more kindly link is there than that which binds the guest to his entertainers? Howbeit I felt it would be a breach of religious duty were I to fail in performing this office for my good friends, when I had undertaken it and had been so well received.

CLYT. You shall none the less be treated according to your full deserts, nor are you likely to be less welcome in this house. Another messenger might equally have brought the news. But it is the hour when strangers who have travelled all day should have some comfort after their long journey. (*To an attendant.*) Take him into our hospitable men's apartments, together with this his follower and fellow-traveller, and there let them have what shall supply their personal need. I bid you do this under pain of our displeasure. Meanwhile I will impart this news to the master of the house, and, with good friends to aid us, we will deliberate over this disaster. [*Exeunt severally.*

CHOR. Dear captive servants of the palace, when shall we display our power of voice in celebrating Orestes?

Earth, revered Goddess, and thou, steep side of the awe-inspiring mound that dost cover the royal person of him who led the fleet, hear this our cry; now succour us; for now is the moment when guileful Persuasion should enter the lists along with our hero, and when Hermes of the shades should make clear the way for the encounter of the fatal sword.

LEADER OF CHOR. It would seem that the foreign man hath been contriving mischief; for here I see the nurse of Orestes all in tears. Wherefore, Cilician handmaid, com'st thou towards the palace-gate, while a grief that none have hired is the companion of thy way?

NURSE. Our mistress bids summon Aegisthus with all speed to meet the stranger-men, that he may come and learn more certainly, being a man, from a man's mouth, this tidings recently announced. With us domestics she made a frowning countenance, hiding within her eyes her laughter over what hath befallen, so happily for her,—although for this mansion utter misery is the consequence of the news which the stranger-men have clearly told. Most surely *he*, when he hears it, will have a cheerful mind, on learning the import of the tale.

Unhappy that I am, how deeply my soul within me hath felt the stress of those intolerable woes that from of old have accumulated in this house of Atreus! But never yet endured I such a sorrow as this. My heart

bore up against the rest, in suffering them; but my beloved Orestes!—over whom I wore out my heart, and nursed him up even from his mother's womb, ministering to him at many a shrill cry that broke my rest [19]. Yea, many troublous things I had to bear that profited me not. For the senseless infant must be tended, like a calf; of course it must. You must have your wits about you! For your child in arms cannot express himself, whether it be hunger or thirst or some other want that presses on him. The young body relieves itself at will. Having to act as prophet of all this, —one often falsified, I trow;—in washing the child's garments, I acted as nurse and washer-woman at once. I then, fulfilling these diverse offices, reared Orestes for his father. And now, to my unhappiness, I learn that he is dead. And I am going to find the man who has polluted this abode. Willing enough will he be to learn what I have to tell.

CHOR. How, then, does she bid him come arrayed?

NURSE. What say you? Repeat it, that I may understand you better.

CHOR. I mean, whether with his guards or by himself alone?

NURSE. She bids him bring his spearmen and followers.

CHOR. Now, do not carry this command to our abhorred master; but bid him come alone (he will be less alarmed at hearing that), and to come quickly. Do so with a cheerful mind. A hidden meaning prospers when a messenger is faithful.

NURSE. Have you some intelligence prompting that suggestion?

CHOR. A belief that Zeus may some day turn the current of these ills.

NURSE. How is that possible? Orestes, the hope of this family, is gone.

CHOR. Not yet! An indifferent soothsayer may divine so much.

NURSE. What do you say? Are you possessed of something different from what hath been told?

CHOR. Go, bear thy message; do what has been bidden you. The Gods have care for what is theirs to provide.

NURSE. Well, I will go, and will obey your counsel. And may the Gods grant that what is best may come to pass! [*Exit.*

CHOR. Now, at my intercession, O Zeus, Father of Olympian Gods, grant that we who are justly eager for the virtuous cause may find a glorious issue, worthy of thy name[20]! Every word in that prayer is full of righteousness. O Zeus, mayst thou hear, and make it good! Ah me! And advance, O Zeus, before his enemies, him now within the palace-walls. Since if thou shalt raise him to great power, thou shalt win return of gifts twofold or threefold as thou wilt. Take knowledge that the orphaned colt of a sire dear to thee hath been yoked to a car of sorrows. And do thou set limits to the course he has to run[21]. Would that one might hear over this plain his home-coming gallop[22], the rhythmic tramping of his triumphant stride!

Hear ye, too, Powers, that with one mind within the palace haunt the luxurious inner chambers. Wash out the stain of ancient bloodshed with a fresh act of righteousness. Let aged Crime no longer beget his likeness in the palace! And, O thou[23] that dwellest in the well-builded cavernous holy place, grant that the home of thy friend may look up cheerfully again, and may see the welcome light of liberty, the gloomy veil being removed.

And let Maia's son, as rightfully he ought, take part in this attempt, since, when he favours a design, his breath best makes it to prosper. I speak mysteriously[24]; he veils his eyes with darkness in the night-time, and in the daylight he moves no less invisibly.

Then, as we celebrate our release from terror, we shall utter to the world loud female strains accompanying the ordered cause, and, chiming therewith, also a note of lamentation[25]. All goeth well: this act increaseth our advantage, and calamity is removed from those I love.

Thou (*to* ORESTES *within*), when the moment for thy part shall have arrived, intrepidly shouting thy father's name to her when she cries, 'O my child!' carry to the bitter end the disastrous but offenceless deed. Keeping in thy breast the firm heart of Perseus, enact, both for thy friends below the ground and those on Earth above, a kindness that is fraught with melancholy rage, filling thine own heart with homicidal horror, but destroying those who were the guilty cause of death.

Enter AEGISTHUS.

AEGIST. I come in answer to a message summoning me. I am told that certain foreigners have brought strange tidings,—in no wise to be desired,—no other than the death of Orestes. This would involve that the house must bear again a bloodstained burden, when already pained and bleeding with former violent deaths. How am I to judge of this as actually true? or are women heaping up their panic-stricken imaginings, that flourish only to die away?[26] What have you to say that may resolve my doubts herein?

CHOR. We heard the tale; but pass thou within and inquire at the strangers' own lips. Intermediaries are of no effect compared with learning at first-hand.

AEGIST. I would see the messenger, and question him again, whether he was himself close by as an eye-witness of the death, or repeats what he has heard from some faint rumour. He will not deceive a mind that is open-eyed. [*Exit* AEGISTHUS.

CHOR. O Zeus, what shall I speak? wherewith shall I begin this prayer and this appeal to Heaven? How shall words express aright my loyalty of soul? For now the edge[27] of the sword which slew the hero, being stained afresh, shall either ruin Agamemnon's offspring utterly for evermore, or, kindling a radiant fire to celebrate freedom, this house shall recover its wide-ruling power and wealth that flows to it from former generations.

In such a wrestling-match, Orestes, with no seconder, is about to cope with his two adversaries. May it end in victory for him!

AEGIST. (*within*). Oh! oh!

CHOR. Ah! woe is me!—Yet another cry! How goes it? What hath been decided there? Stand we apart while the issue is determined, that we may seem innocent of this deed of harm. Even now, methinks, the conflict is over.

Enter a SERVANT.

SERV. Woe, woe unutterable! Our master is struck down. Woe, yet again! I cry it forth the third time, Aegisthus is no more. Open the gate quickly. Unbolt the doors of the women's chamber. Strong rescuers are needed:—not indeed for succour to the slain. How should that be? So-ho!

I am shouting to deaf ears, and howl in vain to people in deep slumber. Where is Clytemnestra? What doeth she? For it would seem her neck is soon to fall upon the block[28] and receive the stroke of righteous retribution.

CLYT. (*re-entering*). What is the matter? What means this hue and cry thou art raising in the house?

SERV. It means that the dead are slaying, and that the living are being slain.

CLYT. Alas! I understand thy riddle. We are to perish by an act of guile, even as we slew. A labourer's axe! Where is it? Quickly give it here! Let us know if we conquer or are conquered. That is

the point to which I am come in this course of misery.

[*The gates are opened.* ORESTES *is discovered on the Ekkyclema, with the dead body of* AEGISTHUS *laid beside him:* PYLADES *standing by.*

ORES. Even thee I seek; for this man, I have done with him.

CLYT. Oh, me! noble Aegisthus, dearest one—dead!

ORES. Call you him dear? Then thou shalt lie in the same grave. No fear of thy deserting him—when thou art dead.

CLYT. Stay, O my son! Respect, my child, this maternal breast, whereat thou, heavy with slumber, didst often, with toothless gums, drain out the life-nourishing milk.

ORES. (*turning to* PYLADES). Advise me, Pylades; shall respect withhold me? Shall I spare my mother, and not kill her?

PYL. What then becomes of that which remains unfulfilled of Loxias' Pytho-given prophecy? What becomes of the firm sanction of our mutual oaths? Count all the world thine enemies, but have the Gods for thy friends.

ORES. Thou hast prevailed. I am resolved. Thou exhortest me nobly. (*To* CLYT.) I choose to despatch thee close by *him* (*pointing to the corpse of* AEGISTHUS). In life thou didst prefer him to my father. Sleep with him then in death, since thou lovest him, and hatest the man whom thou shouldest have loved.

CLYT. The power of Fate was answerable for that act, O my child.

OREST. Then it is Fate who must answer for this doom likewise.

CLYT. Child, have a parent's curses no awe for thee?

OREST. You were my parent, and then recklessly exposed me to misfortune.

CLYT. Was it reckless to send thee to the home of an ally?

OREST. I was basely bargained away—I that was so nobly born.

CLYT. Where then is the price I took for thee?

OREST. Shame forbids me to utter that reproach distinctly.

CLYT. Nay, but tell in the same breath your father's indiscretions too.

OREST. Accuse not him who labours while you sit quietly indoors.

CLYT. A lonely life is a hard trial for women, O my son.

OREST. But it is the man's toil that supports them sitting at their ease within.

CLYT. Child, I see that thou wilt destroy thy mother.

OREST. It is not I, but thou that wilt destroy thyself.

CLYT. Look to it! Beware of thy mother's avenging Furies!

OREST. But how shall I escape my father's Furies, if I neglect this act?

CLYT. My appeal is in vain, like the dirge of the living at a dead man's grave.

Orest. It is my father's doom that decides the question of thy death.

Clyt. Alas! I bare this serpent, and I reared him!

Orest. Truly prophetic was the terror inspired by thy dream.

[*He seizes* Clytemnestra, *who looks fiercely at him.*

Thy deed of blood was horrible—and horrible shall be the manner of thy death.

[*They are withdrawn on the Ekkyclema and the gates are closed.*

Leader of Chor. I mourn indeed for the twofold downfall of those now slain. Yet since Orestes, sad though his fortune is, hath risen atop of this sea of blood, it is our deliberate choice that this light of the royal dwelling should not be utterly extinguished.

Chor. On the sons of Priam in course of time came retribution, with a crushing penalty. And to the home of Agamemnon too is come a twofold lion, a twofold Spirit of War.

He spared not to fulfil his course, the exile sent on his return with oracles from Pytho by the well-considered counsels of the Gods.

Raise the glad shout for the escape of our masters' hall from misery, and from the wasting of his goods by the ill-guided prosperity of two polluters of the home!

He too[29] is here who takes in charge the secret encounter, to bring about the craftily-devised penalty. But in the actual fray who but the true daughter of the Highest guided the avenger's arm? Her name

amongst us mortals, rightly naming her, is Justice; and she breathes destroying anger upon her foes.

The oracle that Loxias, lord of Parnassus, occupying the great hollow of the earth above the Omphalos, gave forth, now brings to pass the guileful harm that long hath tarried. And how should the counsel[30] of God be overborne and made subservient to evil? One must bow before the authority that rules the sky. The light is shining visibly, and the great curb that galled the household is removed. Arise, O dwelling-place! Too long hast thou lain grovelling upon the earth. Soon shall the time of full accomplishment pass the porch-way of the palace, when from the hearth all pollution shall have been driven away, with purgation that expels calamity, and fortune shall breathe in a manner lovely to behold on those who cry, 'The usurpers of the palace are fallen in their turn; the light is shining visibly.'

[ORESTES *is discovered on the Ekkyclema, with the dead bodies of* AEGISTHUS *and* CLYTEMNESTRA. *The web with which* CLYTEMNESTRA *had entangled* AGAMEMNON *is laid beside them.*

OREST. Behold ye these joint tyrants over the land, who slew my father and have made havoc of our home! They were kind before-time when they sat upon their thrones, and they are friends now also as one may guess by their condition. The oath of their covenant is not broken. They swore a league to kill my unhappy father and to die together, and this is done as they have sworn. (*He lifts the web.*) Behold, more-

over, ye that listen to this story of disaster, the bond that was contrived for my hapless sire, the manacles and the fetters to entangle him. (*He passes it to the attendants.*) Stretch it out and display it, standing round—this covering of the man—that our father,—I mean not mine, but the great Sun-god, who witnesses all these events,—may behold my mother's iniquity, and that hereafter he may be my witness, present at my trial, that I had good right in executing this doom upon her that bare me. Aegisthus' fate I account nothing of. He has received his due portion as an adulterer. But as for her, who contrived this horror against her husband, from whom she had borne the burden of children beneath her zone—a burden at that time dear, but now a hostile mischief, as the event declares,—dost thou or dost thou not suppose that, had she been a viper or a water-snake, she would have mortified another by the touch without her bite, in virtue of her criminal daring, and unrighteous thought? (*Looking at the robe, which has been extended.*) How shall I speak of it, however guardedly? A snare for a wild monster? or the inextricable gin set for the feet of a fawn[31]? or you might call it a hunting-net, or a foot-encumbering robe. Such a contrivance a thief might obtain whose life was spent in inveigling strangers and taking purses. And in this cunning snare subduing many, he might often excite his heart. May I not have such a thing to dwell with me in my house! Ere that, may I perish without an heir by the will of Heaven!

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CHOR. Alas! alas! for these unhappy deeds! Dreadful was the death that ended thee! Ah! And sorrow is at height for the survivor.

OREST. Did she the deed or not? This weft bears me witness how the sword of Aegisthus crimsoned it. The stain of blood hath joined with the lapse of time in spoiling the hues on much of the embroidery.

Now am I indeed moved to speak of my father's renown[32], now I lament him as if I saw him die; and as I address myself to this web that murdered him, I am full of pain for what is done and suffered, and for our whole race, polluted as I feel myself by this unenvied triumph.

[*He resumes the web and the Ekkyclema is withdrawn.*

CHOR. None of human mould shall pass his life throughout exempt from crime and disaster. Ah! and of sorrows one is coming; another is to come.

[ORESTES *now enters with an olive branch and fillet in his hand.*

ORES. Come, let me say it to you,—(for I know not what the end will be. I am like a charioteer whose steeds are swerving out of the course. My spirit, breaking from control, overbears and carries me away, while Terror begins preluding to my heart, that beats in unison, and dances to his music).—While I keep my sense, I declare this to all who love me;—In slaying my mother, I had right upon my side. For, being my father's murderess she polluted the land and provoked the abhorrence of the Gods. But more than all, as

having drawn me on to this violence, I dwell upon the fact that the Prophet of Delphi, Loxias himself, gave it out that if I did this I should be free from evil accusation; but if I let it pass,—I will not repeat the penalty. No archer's arrow could reach to such a height of woe.

And now, behold, I go armed with this olive branch and fillet to approach the central seat of Earth, the ground where Loxias abides, and where the flame lightens that is called imperishable,—to defend my cause for this kindred blood-shedding. Loxias enjoined me that I should not betake myself to any other sanctuary.

For the rest, I aver that all the Argives and Menelaus in course of time shall bear me testimony how all this evil came about [33].

I go forth a wanderer, outcast from this land, but leaving behind me this my declaration, whether I live or die.

Chor. Nay, but thou hast achieved gloriously. Yoke not thy tongue to evil forebodings, nor revile thou thine own act. Thou hast set at liberty the whole Argive state by severing at a blow the head of the twofold serpent.

Orest. Ah! Captive women! Here they come!—in the garb of Gorgons, dark-stoled, their locks thickly entwined with snakes. I must be gone.

Chor. Thou who in filial love art of all men best approved, what fancies trouble thee? Stay; be not overborne with terror!

Orest. This is no fancied trouble that oppresses me. Here, unmistakable, I see the Furies of my mother's revenge.

Chor. Yea, the blood on thy hands is yet uncleansed. That is the cause of the disorder that assails thy mind.

Orest. O King Apollo! They multiply. I see them there. Gory hatred is dripping from their eyes.

Chor. One way of cleansing is thine. Go near to Loxias, and he shall free thee for ever from this sorrow.

Orest. Ye see not these forms. But I behold them. I am driven forth. I may not stay.

Leader of Chor. Then fare thou happily. May he that watches over thee divinely guard thee in a course of prosperous fortune!

Chor. Now a third tempest hath blown with a mighty [34] blast on this royal roof and is gone by. The first was the feast of wretched Thyestes on his children's flesh. The second was the murder of a royal husband. He who led the war for the Achaeans was stricken down within the bath and there destroyed. And now is arrived upon a strange mission a third comer—shall I call him Saviour, or Destroyer, or Destiny? Where shall the force of calamity find its issue? When shall it be lulled to rest and change and cease?

EUMENIDES

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

THE PYTHONESS.

APOLLO.

ORESTES.

GHOST OF CLYTEMNESTRA.

CHORUS OF FURIES.

ATHENA.

TWELVE AREOPAGITES.

ATTENDANT MINISTERS.

SCENE.

A. *Delphi.*

B. *The Acropolis at Athens.*

EUMENIDES

SCENE A. *Before the shrine of Apollo at Delphi.*

THE PYTHONESS (*discovered*). First to be adored in this my prayer, as first in honour, shall be the Earth-goddess, eldest of diviners. Themis comes next, for she (so one strain of legend tells) succeeded, as Earth's daughter[1], to this oracular seat. Third, by consent of Themis, all violence apart, another Earth-born Titaness, Phoebé, sate here enthroned. She resigned her right by giving it to Phoebus, her namesake, on his birth. He, leaving the Delian rock that is encircled by the sea, and landing where Pallas holds the ship-visited shore, came on hither to occupy this Parnassian land. He was worshipped highly, and conducted on his way by children of Hephaestus, makers of roads, before whom the savage ground becomes tame. On his arrival here, the people, with Delphos, helmsman of the country, at their head, paid him profound homage. And Zeus, his sire, inspiring his heart with divine skill, installed him as the fourth possessor of this prophetic throne. Here Apollo Loxias sits, the Interpreter of Zeus, his Father. These Powers I name in commencing my prayer. And I yield honour also to Pallas of the ante-

chamber, and I reverence the nymphs who dwell around the Corycian cavern, beloved resort of birds, wherein divine presences are ever moving. Nor is Bacchus absent from my thought, who haunts this ground ever since he divinely led the army of the Bacchanals, when he contrived for Pentheus the death of a hunted hare. Once more I invoke the fountains of Pleistos and the mighty Poseidon, and finally the absolute sovereignty of Zeus the Supreme. Then I take my seat yonder as an inspired prophetess. May the powers I have named grant me by far the happiest access to the God of all I have yet obtained; and if any of Greek race approach the oracle, let them enter in turn by lot, as the custom is. I follow the Divine leading in all my prophecies.

[She goes in, and the theatre appears vacant for a short space—then she comes forth again, distractedly.

A fearful sight,—terrible even to tell of,—hath driven me forth again from the abode of Loxias. I have no strength left in me to sustain my footsteps;—my hands must support me in my flight, so enfeebled are my limbs. An aged woman frightened is a thing of nought, in strength no better than a child.

I was advancing towards the richly-garlanded recess, when I beheld, seated suppliant on the Omphalos, one blighted by a Divine ban. His hands had gouts of blood upon them, and he held a sword unsheathed, and therewithal a twig from the topmost boughs of an olive-tree, modestly filleted with a great soft tuft of

white and spotless wool. Such, in plain terms, was his array. But in front of him, asleep, there sate a marvellous female troop. Yet they were not women: I should rather call them Gorgons:—but neither is that their true likeness. I saw once a picture of the Gorgons carrying away Phineus's supper. Now these are without wings, and their appearance is altogether detestable. Their breath, as they belch it forth, is unendurable. Their visage is dark, and from their eyes a hateful ooze is dripping. Then their attire is such as ought never to be brought near to shrines of deities, no, nor to homes of men. Their race is unfamiliar to me, and I cannot tell what land may boast of painfully rearing such a kind without sorrowing afterward.

Let the lord of this abode, Loxias of irresistible might, himself provide for what ensues. He unites the healing with the prophetic art: he divines from portents: and all others look to him to purge their dwellings. [*Exit.*

[*The interior of the Adytum is discovered.* ORESTES *is seen in a suppliant attitude on the Omphalos. The* FURIES *are seated on either side of him, in profound slumber.* APOLLO *appears. Either* HERMES, *or a statue of* HERMES, *is also present in the scene.*

APOLLO *to* OREST. I will not desert thy cause. Thy guardian even to the end, at hand or afar off, still watching over thee, I will not relent towards thine enemies. At this moment, as you see, these thy mad

pursuers have been overtaken. Oppressed with sleep are those maidens abominable, with whom nor God nor man nor brute hath ever any fellowship. To work evil was the purpose of their being, and evil is the gloom where they inhabit in nethermost Tartarus, abhorred as they are alike of humankind and of the Olympian Gods.

But fly thou, notwithstanding, and be not remiss. For they will hold thee in chase, whether, traversing wide continents in thy wandering, thou tread firm ground, or whether thou pass over the deep and range among sea-surrounded cities. Grow thou not weary of thy tendance upon this toil, until thou come to the citadel of Pallas. There seat thyself and cling with thine arm to the ancient sacred image of the Goddess. And there we shall find a Court that shall judge thy cause, and with persuasive pleadings we will discover a way to relieve thee utterly for ever from this affliction. Thou knowest, it was I who moved thee to destroy the life of thy mother.

Orest. O lord Apollo, thou knowest righteousness. And since thou hast that knowledge, be it thine to protect the right. Thy power for doing good is amply assured.

Apollo. Remember! Let not terror prevail upon thy spirits. And thou (*to* Hermes), mine own brother, son of Zeus, our common sire,—Hermes, keep watch over this our friend. 'Conductor' thou art named,—give him safe-conduct without fail. Be a shepherd of my suppliant here. Thy herald's office is one that Zeus

approves, when in its exercise it gives happy guidance to mankind.

[APOLLO *disappearing, the ghost of* CLYTEMNESTRA *appears.*

CLYT. Ho!

Sleep on, forsooth!—Of what use are you when asleep? I, thus deprived of honour among the dead through your default, am continually reviled by them on account of him whom I slew, and am shamefully banished their society. I declare to you that they reproach me grievously. Yet for the violence I suffered from my nearest kin, no divine power puts forth wrath on my account, butchered as I was with matricidal hands.

Behold with thy spirit these my wounds[2]! For the mind in those who slumber hath the clearer vision. A narrow outlook is our portion in the daylight. Much wealth of mine ye have lapped up, wineless drink-offerings to soothe your sober hearts, and dread night-banquets by the burning brazier, wherein I sacrificed to you, at a season which ye share with none of the supernal powers. All this I see disregarded,—trodden under foot. He hath stolen away from you, as a fawn out of the snare;—yea, nimbly springing out of the midmost of your net he bounds away with eager eyes that mock at you.

Hear me. It is of my soul's welfare that I speak. Attend, ye subterranean powers! Clytemnestra, who is now a dream, invokes you.

[*A sound of snoring from Chorus.*

CLYT. Snore, if ye will. But he is flying onward, out of your reach. For he hath friends of a different quality from mine[3]. [*Snoring again heard.*

CLYT. Ye are too sound asleep to feel compassion for my case. Meanwhile my murderer, Orestes—his mother's murderer—is escaped.

[*Moaning from Chorus.*

CLYT. Ye are moaning in your sleep. Arise, and quickly too! What deed have ye to boast of, save contrivance of harm? [*Moaning again.*

CLYT. Slumber and weariness have confirmed their league and have sunk in decrepitude the valour of the dreaded dragoness.

[*A snorting sound from Chorus, as if awaking, repeated.*

CHOR. 1. Take hold! CHOR. 2. Take hold! CHOR. 3. Take hold! CHOR. 4. Take hold! CHOR. 5. Bethink thee!

CLYT. Ye are hunting in a dream, and whimpering like a hound that leaves not to hanker after the chase. What art thou doing? Rise! Give not way to fatigue, nor let slumber soften in thee the sense of wrong! Let thy inward part be pained with reproaches that are just. A goad pierces not more sharply to the virtuous mind. Do thou, directing on his bark the gale of thy gory breath, and withering him with vapour from the fire within thee, keep up with him; pursue him again to his undoing. [*Ghost of* CLYTEMNESTRA *disappears.*

LEADER OF CHOR. Awake! Waken thou her! I waken thee.

Sleepest thou? Arise! Spurn slumber from thee, and let us try if our prelude be without effect.

Chor. 1. Out on it! Ugh! Friends, we are wronged.

2. Deep is my wrong, without redress.

3. We suffer grievous wrong, alas, intolerable ill! Our quarry is lost out of the net! he is gone! Sleep overcame me, and I have forfeited my prey.

1. Ho, son of Zeus, thou stealest thine advantage.

2. Thy youth has ridden down our time-honoured powers——

1. Honouring, as thou dost, thy suppliant, a godless man, who did despite to a parent. Yea, being a God, thou hast stolen the matricide away.

2. Can it be shown that herein thou dealest justly?

1. Reproach came in a dream to me and smote me, like a charioteer who grasps the goad by the middle, and strikes the tenderest place behind the ribs.

2. I shudder as from the exceedingly grievous smart of the common executioner's hateful scourge.

1. Such acts the younger deities are performing, carrying force to the uttermost beyond the right.

2. Dripping over with gore that covers head and foot[4], the Navel of Earth is clearly seen to have assumed blood-guiltiness that clings to it.

1. Prophet as thou art, thou hast stained thy sanctu-

ary with pollution that affects the hearth; thou hast done it of thine own impulsion, by thy sole command; contravening heavenly ordinance to honour mortal claims, bringing to nought the Fates whose being is from of old.

2. Phoebus may vex my heart, but shall not deliver his favourite. Though he be hidden in the grave, he finds no acquittance there. Craving purgation from his guilt, he but gets a new punisher in place of the earthly avenger [5].

APOLLO *re-appears.*

APOLLO. Begone, I bid you! Depart quickly from this mansion. Make off from mine oracular sanctuary, lest being overtaken by the shining winged snake that darts forth from the firm golden bowstring, ye disgorge with pain the dark froth from human flesh, as ye vomit the clotted gore that ye have drained. It becomes you not to encroach on this abode. Your place is where sentence of beheading is executed, or of plucking out eyes, where human lives are sacrificed, and where, by destroying in young boys all possibility of seed, the prime of manhood is marred ere it arrive; where limbs are mutilated, where men are stoned to death, or moan long and piteously, being impaled. Do ye hear me tell what festival it is whereof the charms belong to you, whom the Gods abhor? The whole fashion of your shapes suggests it. Such creatures should inhabit the cave of some ravenous gory lion; not taint with their pollution this wealthy oracular

seat. Depart, like a herd of goats with none to herd you; for no God can be found to care for such a flock.

Chor. My lord Apollo! hear our reply. Thou art not an abettor of this crime, but principal agent in it, responsible for all.

Apollo. How mean you? You may explain yourself so far.

Chor. You gave it forth oracularly that this Argive should murder her that bare him.

Apollo. I gave it forth that he should execute vengeance for his father.—What then?

Chor. Thereafter thou didst undertake to afford sanctuary to strange blood-guiltiness.

Apollo. Yes, I enjoined him to seek purgation here.

Chor. And having done so, would you disparage us who escort him hither?

Apollo. It is not meet that ye should approach to this my temple.

Chor. Nay, but, it is our appointed office——

Apollo. What prerogative is that you claim? Declare your noble privilege.

Chor. We drive the matricide from home.

Apollo. But what of women, when one hath despatched her husband?

Chor. That would not be the murder of a kinsman, nor involve blood-guiltiness in the highest degree.

Apollo. Assuredly thou puttest off all reverence for the pledge which Hera gave, as the true and perfect wife of Zeus. That counts for nought with thee, and so do Aphrodité's honours, which thou discardest; and

yet they are the source of the dearest ties known to mankind. For wedlock, ratified by destiny, between man and wife, while honestly maintained, hath the mightiest of all sanctions; but if you are slack in visiting their mutual violences, and neither punish these[6] nor look upon them in anger, I pronounce your following of Orestes to be unrighteous. For I perceive that one cause provokes you to excess of wrath, while in regard to the other ye are manifestly unmoved. Howbeit, the Goddess Athena shall review this case.

CHOR. I promise you I will never leave my pursuit of Orestes there.

APOLLO. Pursue him, then. It will but increase thy labour.

CHOR. Do not thou curtail my honours with thy words.

APOLLO. Thy honours are not such as I should care to have.

CHOR. Without them thou standest high enough, as they say, at the right hand of Zeus. But I, for this mother's blood invites me, will follow up my suit against Orestes, and will hunt him down.

APOLLO. And I will succour him, and vindicate my suppliant. For, should I allow myself to betray his cause, the resentment of him who sought purgation from me carries terror with it that is felt by Gods and men. [*Exeunt.*

B. *The Scene changes to the Acropolis at Athens.* ORESTES *is discovered, clinging to the ancient image of Athena.*

ORES. Lady Athena, by the bidding of Loxias I am

come hither;—and do thou with clemency receive me, oppressed with guilt indeed, but not unpurged nor freshly attainted. For frequent contact with other dwellings and other paths of men, as I wandered alike through dry land and over sea, hath ere now dimmed the stain of blood. Obedient to the oracular command of Loxias, O Goddess, I approach thy mansion and thine image, whereunto clinging, in this spot, I await the final issue of judgement.

Chor. (*entering dispersedly*). 1. Ah! here is unmistakably the trail of the man. Keep up with the suggestions of the silent informant. Like a hound pursuing a wounded fawn, we track him out where the blood-drops leave their trace. With the manifold toil of endeavouring to subdue this victim my vital parts are panting; for I have ranged over every region of the earth, and in my wingless flight I came pursuing him over the deep, not less swiftly than a ship. Now he has cowered down somewhere hereabout. The smell of human gore salutes my delighted sense.

2. Look out, look out again; scan carefully each pathway, lest unawares the matricide should have escaped away unpunished.

3. Behold him again! where having found shelter he clings about the image of the deathless Goddess, and offers to submit to trial for his deed of bloodshed.

4. That may not be. The mother's blood upon the earth (ah! woe!) is hard to gather up again, when once it hath sunk out of sight, being poured in streams upon the ground.

5. Nay, thou art bound to yield requital, that I should drain the ruddy drops from thy living limbs. From thee I would obtain rich nourishment in draughts that men abhor.

6. Even while thou livest I will wither thee and drag thee down to the grave, that thou mayst pay me recompense for thy mother's cruel agony.

7. And thou shalt see whoever else of mortals hath sinned against a God or failed in reverence to some stranger or to parents dear,—each suffering full recompense for his transgression.

8. Yea, for beneath the ground the unseen God is mighty to take exact account. Clear-sighted is his thought, recording everything.

Orest. I am experienced in misfortune, and have learned how seasonably to speak where speech is right, and to be silent likewise. In the present business a wise instructor has appointed me to lift up my voice. The stain of blood upon my hand is dull and fading, and the pollution of matricide is washed away; for while still fresh it was dispersed at the hearth of Apollo's temple with purifying sacrifice of swine. And were I to tell the whole, I should have much to say of many to whom I have come near, without harming them through intercourse with me. Old time makes all things old, and purifies them; and now with unpolluted mouth I piously invoke Athena, Queen of this country, to come and be mine aid. So without war she shall acquire the firm and lasting alliance, faithfully maintained, both of myself, and of my land and of the Argive

people. Then, whether in some region of the Libyan land, near to the waters of Triton, that are associated with her birth, she move in stately robes, or with a nimble foot aiding those whom she loves; or whether she visit the Phlegraean field, like a bold general marshalling her host,—may she come hither—(and a God hears though far away)—that she may prove my deliverer from this affliction.

Leader of Chor. Most surely neither Apollo nor mighty Athena shall rescue thee from wandering forlorn, a stranger to all knowledge of joy, a bloodless prey of Divine powers, a shadow of thyself.—Wilt thou not even answer me, and dost thou reject my words,—thou, my fatted and consecrated victim? I will feast on thee while yet thou livest, without altar or sacrificial knife. Listen, then, to this my song that is to bind thy spirit!

—Come now, and let us form for the dance, since we are resolved to exhibit our hated power of song, and to declare our office, how this band of ours directs and guides human affairs. We are believers in our own righteousness. No wrath from us approaches the man that holds unpolluted hands before him. He passes unscathed through a long lifetime. But whosoever after transgressing, as this man hath done, hides his hands that are imbrued with blood: against him we appear in righteous witness on behalf of the dead, and prosecute him to the bitter end for his blood-guiltiness.

CHOR. O mother Night, my mother that diddest bear me for retribution to souls that are in light, and those in darkness, hear me! Latona's offspring would balk me of my prerogative, and seeks to rob me of this cowering creature whom his mother with full right consigns to me as the guilty author of her death. On him, our devoted victim, this song hath power, for madness, for distraction, for the ruin of mind;—this Furies' hymn, not attuned to the lyre, that binds the soul, that shrivels mortals.

This office Fate the unchangeable bound firmly on me when she span my vital thread, that I should follow those mortals upon whom guilt of wanton violence to their own kin hath fallen, until the life sinks beneath the Earth;—yea, even when dead, the man is not wholly free. On him, our devoted victim, this song hath power, for madness, for distraction, for the ruin of mind;—this Furies' hymn, not attuned to the lyre, that binds the soul, that shrivels mortals.

At our very birth this office was appointed ours. But from the immortals we are to refrain: nor is any one of them a sharer in our feast. Naught have I to do at any time with white and festal robes. For I have made my own the undoing of the home, when the War-spirit sitting by the domestic hearth have slain one near and dear. Pursuing such a man (Aha!), strong though he be, we make him feeble under the burden of strange guilt.

We hasten to relieve others of these cares, and acquit the high Gods of all obligations coming from

prayers addressed to me. No verbal process do we require. Zeus has disdained to hold converse with this our tribe whose blood-stained garb only earns his hatred. . . .

Proud thoughts of men, that flaunt themselves in sight of Heaven, shrink underground and dwindle down into shame, before our dark-robed advance, the rhythmic beat of our odious tread. For bounding from aloft I bring down heavily my crushing foot-fall, making the swift to stumble [7] beneath calamities that are beyond their strength.

The man is falling, but, blinded with infatuation, he is unaware of it;—with such impenetrable gloom do mists of pollution float around him; and the voice of rumour mixed with lamentation calls clouds of darkness to envelop the house. [For bounding from aloft, etc. . . .]

For the doom is irreversible. We pursue our end, and contrive means for it, ever mindful of the Evil, inexorable and awful to mankind. Thus we administer an office dishonoured and contemned, aloof from the high Gods, in a sunless murky region, preparing rough paths of stumbling alike for clear-sighted men and blind [8]. Who then of mortals feels not a sacred awe and dread in hearing me tell of mine ordinances that Fate ratifies, of the power committed to me by the Gods with absolute right? Still [9] abides mine antique prerogative, nor are my honours in abeyance, though mine appointed place is underground, and though I dwell in unsunned gloom.

ATHENA *appears.*

ATH. I heard the noise of your summons to me far away, by the Scamander, where I was taking possession of the land which, as is well known, the leaders and chiefs of the Achaeans, assigning to me a liberal share of the fruits of conquest, allotted out and out to be my lasting portion, a choice prize awarded to the sons of Theseus.

Thence came I speeding on mine unwearied way, not poised on wings, but whirring instead the ample folds of mine Aegis, when I had harnessed these prime steeds to my chariot here. And now, on seeing such unaccustomed visitants in my land, I feel, not any fear, but astonishment in beholding them.

Say, who are ye? I speak to you all,—at once to this stranger who is kneeling beside mine image, and to you, who are unlike all creatures born. Such forms are never seen by Gods amongst the Goddesses, nor bear ye any resemblance to mortal shapes. But to speak evil of one's neighbours without cause of offence[10] were to depart from righteousness and to be disowned by Equity.

CHOR. Daughter of Zeus, we will inform thee in few words. We are Eternal Children of Night. 'Curses' are we named in our dwelling-place beneath the Earth.

ATH. That origin and surname are familiar to me.

CHOR. Soon thou shalt further know my quality and rights.

ATH. I shall, if they are put forth clearly.

Chor. We drive away from their homes whoever slay mankind.

Ath. And where does the slayer find the limit of his flight?

Chor. Where all joy is absent and unknown.

Ath. Is it into such banishment your clamorous pursuit would drive this man?

Chor. Since he elected to be his mother's murderer.

Ath. Was there no compulsive terror that constrained him to it?

Chor. What force is there so cogent as to compel a man to matricide?

Ath. Two parties are in court, and we have heard one.

Chor. Nay, but he will refuse either to receive or to give the sanction of an oath.

Ath. Thou preferrest the name of righteous to the 430 reality.

Chor. How, I pray you? Tell us that out of your rich treasury of wisdom.

Ath. I mean that you should not aim at an unfair victory by appealing to the Oath.

Chor. Well then, examine him, and judge the cause in righteousness.

Ath. Are you ready to refer to me as final arbiter?

Chor. Undoubtedly, with due regard for thy great worth.

Ath. Stranger, what dost thou choose to answer in thy turn? Declare thy country and thy kin, and thy misfortune, and thereafter make thy defence against

their indictment;—if it be so that in reliance on a just cause thou art seated clinging to mine image here, beside my hearth, in the solemn suppliant fashion of Ixion. To all this make some reply that shall be clear to me.

Orest. O Lady Athena, first of all I will dissipate a great anxiety with which thy last words are clouded. I am not one who crave purgation, nor with pollution cleaving to me have I taken my seat beside thine image. Of this I bring before thee irrefragable testimony. One guilty of homicide is bound to maintain silence, until the sacrifice of a suckling animal have besprinkled him with purifying blood. This consecration hath long since passed upon me at other dwelling-places, both with such victims, and with fresh streams of water.

This care, then, mine explanation thus removes. As for my kin, you shall quickly be informed of that. I am an Argive, and my father is well known to you—Agamemnon—he that organised the heroic navy—with whom for instrument thou madest the Trojan land and city of Ilium to be no more a city. He perished ingloriously on returning to his home. My black-hearted mother slew him; after enfolding him within a subtle snare, which out of the bath gave witness of his murder. I, beforetime an exile, returned home and slew my mother,—I will not deny it,—in bloody recompense for a sire so dear to me. And to this act Apollo, too, was accessory: who proclaimed that I should have sorrows to goad my heart with remorse, should I not

do thus to those who were the authors of that guilt. Thou, then, give sentence, whether mine act was righteous or unrighteous ; for whatever be the issue of thy judgement I will acquiesce in it.

Ath. This affair is too grave for any mortal to pre- 470
sume to judge of it. Nor in truth have I the right of jurisdiction in a cause of homicide, provoking intense wrath. And the matter is more arduous, in that while thou art come to my temple a suppliant purified and harmless,—and, in any case, I would have no offence between my citizens and thee,—these powers are of a nature not easy to dismiss; for if they fail to win victory for their cause, the venom from their thoughts affecting the land becomes hereafter an intolerable deep disease for the whole country. Such is the case before me. Their abiding here and their dismissal 480
hence, are both alike hard to compass without incurring wrath. Howbeit, since this affair hath come this way for settlement, I will institute a court of men who shall reverence the oath-bound ordinance which I shall enact for all time to come. Do ye call in your evidence and array your proofs, pledged to support the just cause. Meanwhile I will select the best of my own citizens, and bring them to decide this case sincerely, with a mind that swerves not from the right, and departs not from the sanction of the oath.

[Athena *disappears.*

Chor. Now the ordinance is overturned, and revolu- 490
tion breaks forth, if indeed the cause and the offence of this matricide shall prevail. This act will now com-

bine all mortals in unanimity of recklessness. And in the time to come, many a parricidal deed, not in name only, shall be done to parents, since from us, mad watchers of the world, no wrath for offences shall any more proceed : every death shall pass me by ; and they shall learn from one another, as they tell of a neighbour's disaster, concerning the remission and ending of our [11] toil ; while some poor wretch shall vainly advise precarious remedies.

Let no man make appeal when he is smitten with misfortune, crying out, O Justice! O enthroned Erinyes! Such piteous utterance perchance may proceed from a father or a mother newly stricken, now that the fabric of righteousness collapses.

In some place, fear and wisdom should have an abiding seat. It is well for him who is coerced to self-control. But who,—what man, what city,—whose heart is pampered in the absence of fear, can any longer have like reverence for Justice?

Approve not of the life that is ungoverned, nor of that which lies beneath an absolute sway. Divine Power, though varying in its dispensations, hath once for all assigned the victory to the middle state. And in just accord therewith I say that Impiety hath Insolence for his true-born child, whereas from sound and wholesome thoughts there is engendered Prosperous Life, much prayed for, ever beloved.

This above all I say to thee,—Revere the throne of Justice, nor spurn at it with godless heel when thou lookest upon gain. Such courses will not go un-

punished. There remaineth the appointed end. Wherefore let each man heedfully give chief honour to his parents' reverence, and respect the worth of strangers when they visit his abode.

He that unconstrained and of his own free will keeps justice shall not be unblest, nor shall he ever perish utterly. But as for the froward rash transgressor[12] who wrests most things confusedly away from justice, I declare that he in time, in spite of himself, shall lower his canvas, overtaken by rough weather, when the yard-arm is breaking.

Then, as he struggles vainly amidst the overmastering eddy, he calls aloud on those who hear him not at all. The Divine Power laughs at the excitement of the man, beholding one, who imagined this could never be, subdued beneath distress and hopelessly submerged[13].

The happiness that through all his previous life was his, he has wrecked by running against Justice, as a sunken rock, and perishes, unwept for, utterly extinguished.

ATHENA *re-appears.* *The* AREOPAGITES *come in.*

ATH. Herald, make proclamation, and hush the folk to silence. And let the Tyrrhene trumpet with its piercing tones, being filled full with human breath, send forth its thrilling utterance among my people. Your silence assisting, while this Council is assembling, this city for evermore shall understand my law, and these grave men shall learn it, that so this cause may be righteously determined.

APOLLO *appears.*

LEADER OF CHOR. Lord Apollo, seek not to use power beyond thy sphere. Say, what hast thou to do in this business?

APOLLO. I come to give evidence—for Orestes here hath been duly constituted a suppliant of my hearth and sanctuary, and I am he that have made purgation of this homicide. I come, moreover, myself to meet the accusation. For I share the responsibility for the violent death of this man's mother. Open the case, Athena, and apply thy wisdom to bring it to an issue.

ATH. Thus I open it. Ye (*to* CHOR.) have the foremost word. The prosecutor's full statement, leading the way, shall duly instruct us in the nature of the suit.

LEADER OF CHOR. Though we are many, our speech will be concise. (*To* OREST.) Reply to our questions, one by one. CHOR. 2. First, Didst thou kill thy mother?

OREST. That cannot be denied. I slew her.

CHOR. 3. There! One of the three wrestling-bouts is already over.

OREST. Boast as you will, I am not down yet.

CHOR. 4. Well, you must say further how you slew her.

OREST. With drawn sword in my hand I made incision on her throat.—It is said.

CHOR. 5. Under what influence and by whose counsel?

OREST. Moved by Apollo's prophecies, as he bears me witness.

CHOR. 6. The Divine Prophet, say you?—was your authority for matricide!

OREST. Ay, and to this day I find nothing to regret therein.

CHOR. 7. By and by, when the verdict hath thee in its gripe, thou wilt tell another tale.

OREST. My father from his grave will send me succour. I have no fear.

CHOR. 8. Wilt thou kill thy mother, and then repose thy confidence in the dead?

OREST. She was doubly attainted. That is why.

CHOR. 9. Explain that saying. Let the court understand you.

OREST. She slew her husband; and, in doing so, she slew my father.

CHOR. 10. Death freed her from that debt. Thou art yet alive.

OREST. But while she lived, why didst not thou pursue and banish her?

CHOR. 11. She was bound by no ties of blood to the person whom she slew.

OREST. But I, you think, am the blood-relation of my mother?

CHOR. 12. Wouldst thou renounce relationship to thy mother? What blood-bond is so dear? Did she not nurse thy matricidal bones within her womb?

OREST. It is time for thee, Apollo, to bear witness. Give thine authoritative word, whether or not, in slaying her, I had right upon my side. For to have done the deed I deny not. That is so. But if in thy judgement

this act of blood was righteously or wrongfully performed, declare it, that I may inform the Court thereof.

Apollo. To your high Court, the noble creation of Athena, I declare that it was done righteously. And being a prophet, I shall not be belied. Never yet have I spoken anything on my seat of prophecy, touching man or woman or state, but what Zeus the father of Olympian Gods hath bidden me to speak. I would have you understand the weight of my deliverance, and I forewarn you to abide by my Father's counsel. For nothing exceeds the power of Zeus,—not even the sanction of an oath.

Chor. This oracle, as thou declarest, proceeded forth from Zeus, that thou shouldst tell Orestes here in revenging his father's death to lay aside all duty to his mother?

Apollo. Incomparably more heinous is the murder of a man, and of a man commanding homage through the sceptre given him by Zeus,—murder done, too, by a woman, not with far-darting arrows, as from an Amazon's warlike bow, but in the manner whereof ye shall hear,—thou, O Athena, and ye who are now in session to give your decisive verdict on this case. He had returned from the war, wherein he had been mostly fortunate, and she had received him with smooth welcome; then in the bath, as he was ending his ablutions, and was close upon the goal of his desires, she encased him in an intricate web, and hacked her husband when she had entangled him in those embroidered hangings.

I have told you the manner of the death of the man of highest worship, the admiral of the great navy. And of her I have spoken in such terms as must provoke their indignation who have been set to determine this cause.

Chor. Zeus cares more for the father's death, according to you. Yet he himself imprisoned his father Cronos. Is there no contradiction there? Take note of that, ye justices, we beseech you.

Apollo. O wild beasts that ye are, utterly hateful, detested of the Gods,—the prisoner may be released: mere bondage is not an irremediable evil. Full many are the resources for its undoing. But when once the dust hath drained the blood of man in death, he rises up no more. My father has provided no effectual charm for this; although, with an energy that knows no breathing-space, he turneth backward and forward all other things, disposing them at his will.

Chor. Then see to it, what thou dost in advocating this man's deliverance, when he hath shed upon the ground his mother's kindred blood. Shall he thereafter, in Argos, inhabit his father's hall? What altars of his country will suffer his approach? What lustral rite of brotherhood will accept of him?

Apollo. This also I will declare. Attend, and understand the rightness of my speech. The mother is not the parent of the so-called child. She only nurses the embryo-germ entrusted to her. The begetter is the parent:—she keeps as for a stranger-friend (if God prevent not birth) the young plant that is committed

to her care. I will point out to you a manifest instance in proof of what I say. Fatherhood is possible without a mother. Here at hand, to witness that, is the daughter of Olympian Zeus, a child never carried about or nursed in the darkness of the womb, yet such a sapling as no God in heaven could bring forth. I, O Athena, will both in other ways exalt to the best of my power thy citadel and thy people, and I have brought Orestes to be a suppliant at thy hearth, in order that he may prove faithful to thee for all time to come, and that thou, O Goddess, mayst win him and his posterity for thine allies, and that this may remain for an everlasting ordinance, that the successive generations of thy citizens here should acquiesce in this firm league.

ATH. Enough has been spoken. Now I bid the judges to give their honest votes with all sincerity of mind.

CHOR. I have shot my last arrow; but I wait to hear how the contest shall be determined.

ATH. How mean you? How am I to vote so as to satisfy you?

APOLLO. Ye have heard the pleadings, strangers. Now, as ye give your votes, bear reverence in your inmost hearts for the oath ye have taken.

ATH. Hear now mine ordinance, ye Athenians, who are judging the first cause of human blood-shedding. This Council shall remain to the people of Aegeus for evermore as a court for judgement. This hill of Ares, where the Amazons pitched their camp when they

waged war on us in resentment for Theseus' acts; making this at that time their lofty citadel newly fortified over against our town, and sacrificing to Ares (whence the rocky mount is called by his name);—this same shall be a place of worship for my citizens, and of the fear that is akin to worship; restraining them from wrong-doing whether by day or night;—unless the burghers shall of themselves make wanton innovation. When once you stain with strange and muddy influx the clear spring water, you will not find it good to drink! I counsel my citizens to guard and reverence the just mean between anarchy and tyranny, and not to eliminate from the city all restraint of fear. For which of mortals may live righteously who stands in awe of nothing? If only ye maintain a righteous fear and dread for this mine ordinance, you will have a saving bulwark of your country and your state, better than any mortal tribe possesses, either amongst the Scythians, or in the realm of Pelops. I appoint then this council, reverend, incorruptible, keen to execute wrath, to be the garrison of the land, keeping watch on behalf of those who slumber.

So far I have extended my exhortation to my own citizens for all time to come. Now you must rise, take up each of you his voting-ball, and decide the cause, duly reverencing your oath. All hath now been said.

CHOR. Listen! I counsel you in no way to cast a slur on us who are come to dwell in your land.

APOLLO. I too enjoin you to fear my oracles, the oracles of Zeus, and not to render them of no effect.

CHOR. Thou goest beyond thine office in showing this great care for offences of bloodshed. Thy prophecies henceforth will proceed from an oracular dwelling-place that is no longer clean.

APOLLO. Have my father's purposes lost any of their force since Ixion the first homicide craved purgation from him?

CHOR. Thou talkest. But I, if my rights are refused to me, will dwell within this land hereafter, a ruinous guest.

APOLLO. Thy rights are scouted alike by the young and elder deities. My cause shall prevail.

CHOR. Such were thy doings in the home of Pheres; where thou didst induce the Fates to exempt a mortal from death.

APOLLO. Ought one not to benefit one's worshipper, above all when he stands in need?

CHOR. Thou didst bring to naught the ancient dispensation, and didst delude with wine the Destinies, those primeval powers.

APOLLO. Ere long, when thou art cast in thy suit, the venom thou emittest will henceforth be harmless to thy foes.

CHOR. Thy youth would override our age. I remain therefore eagerly listening, with a mind in suspense whether or not to break forth in anger against this city.

ATHENA. To me it falls to pronounce judgement last. Herewith I add my vote to the side of Orestes[14]. I have no mother who brought me forth. With my

whole spirit, in everything I approve the male, except for marriage. Above all I take a father's part. It follows that I shall not care so much for the death of a wife that slew her lord, the family's rightful head. Now, even should his trial issue in an equality of ballot-ing, Orestes wins.

Shake out forthwith the voting-pebbles from the urns, ye of the court to whom this duty hath been assigned.

[*The tellers approach the urns and turn out the ballots.*

Orest. O Phoebus Apollo, what will be the issue?

Chor. O Night, my dark-eyed mother, seest thou what is being done?

Orest. Now comes the end for me, to be strangled, or be alive indeed.

Chor. The end for us, to pass away, or to maintain our honours.

Apollo. Count honestly the pebbles as they fall out, my friends! In laying them apart keep reverence for the right. The absence of one vote brings on a mighty sorrow, while its single presence[15] restores prosperity. [*The tellers report the numbers to Athena.*

Ath. Orestes is delivered from the sentence of blood-guiltiness. The numbering of the ballots proves them equal.

Orest. O Pallas Athena, upholder of mine ancestral home! thou hast restored me to my land, when I was a homeless exile. Every Greek shall say of me, Orestes is again an Argive; he is established in his patrimony by the will of Pallas and of Loxias and of

him, third named but Supreme, the Saviour Zeus, who, feeling for my father's death, hath vindicated me, looking in the face these advocates of my mother's cause. I therefore, ere returning home, will swear an oath that shall be binding henceforth to all time, making promise to thy land and people here, that no man bearing sway over the Argive country shall bring against them hither the well-appointed war. And if any trangress this my oath-bound promise, I, then within my grave, will vex them with baffling troubles, setting despondency in their pathways, and ill auguries where they think to pass, so that they shall repent them of their own endeavour. But while my promise is observed, and while my citizens effectively honour with firm alliance this city of Athena, I myself will show them greater kindness.

Farewell, then, thou and thy whole people! May they, inhabiting this city, be ever irresistible in wrestling with their foes, ever unharmed. ever triumphant in war. [*Exit.*

Chor. Ho! Younger Gods, ye have over-ridden the old ordinances, ye have wrested from my grasp . . .[16] I, all unhappy, robbed of my rights—woe is me!—will drip upon this land, to destroy it, the venom of my heart's resentment, oozing from within me;—whence cancerous growths, forbidding leafage, forbidding childbirth, spreading over the plain—O Justice!—shall inflict upon the land a stain that is ruinous to humankind. I groan in spirit. What are to be my deeds? Shall I press intolerably on the inhabitants of the city,

requiting what I suffer? Great are our wrongs, unhappy that we are, daughters of Night, aggrieved and grieving!

Ath. Let me prevail with you, that ye bear it not so sorely. Ye are not really vanquished, but the voting on the cause honestly came out even. There has been no desire to disparage your honours. But manifest evidence was given on the authority of Zeus, and given by him from whom the oracle proceeded, purporting that Orestes should be scathless, if he acted thus. Then make not ye your dangerous wrath to strike this country, nor be angered grievously. Nor cause sterility by issuing hostile shafts of cankerous drippings, unkindly to all seed. For with full warrant I guarantee to you that ye shall hold a hidden place within a true and faithful land, seated on thrones beside richly furnished altars, receiving gifts of adoration from these citizens.

Chor. Ho! Younger Gods, ye have over-ridden the old ordinances, ye have wrested from my grasp . . . I, all unhappy, robbed of my rights—woe is me!—will drip upon this land, to destroy it, the venom of my heart's resentment, oozing from within me;—whence cancerous growths, forbidding leafage, forbidding childbirth, spreading over the plain—O Justice!—shall inflict upon the land a stain that is ruinous to humankind. I groan in spirit. What are to be my deeds? Shall I press intolerably on the inhabitants of the city, requiting what I suffer? Great are our wrongs, unhappy that we are, daughters of Night, aggrieved and grieving!

Ath. Ye are not mulcted of your rights. Divine as ye are, be not wrathful to excess, nor fix upon poor mortals the doom of lasting barrenness[17] for their land. I also place my reliance upon Zeus. Need I say more? I, and I only, can unlock the armoury wherein the thunder is stored. But that shall not need. Thou wilt yield assent to me, and wilt not utter rash words to bring failure on all fruit-bearing things. Quiet the dark billows of bitter fury in thee, since thou shalt have proud honours, and make thy dwelling with me. And when moreover thou receivest for evermore from this ample region first-fruits in sacrifice for birth of children and for marriage-blessing, you will have reason to commend my words.

Chor. Alas! that I should be thus wronged! that I deep-thoughted aged one, should dwell beneath the ground (ah me!) a dishonoured object of abhorrence! I pant with vehement wrath, with utter rage. O woe, woe, woe! What pang is this that pierces deep within me? Listen to my angry heart, O mother Night! From mine ancient honours the baffling wiles of the high Gods have uprooted me, setting me at naught.

Ath. I will bear with thine angry mood. Thou art elder than I, and therein thou hast truly the advantage of me, but to me also Zeus hath granted no mean intelligence. Let me forewarn you that if ye pass forth to another region, ye will fall deeply in love with this land. For the time that is coming on shall flow with larger honours for her citizens here; and thou when thou hast thy worshipped seat beside the man-

sion of Erechtheus, shalt obtain from companies of Athenian men and women more offerings than thou couldest ever gain from other mortals. Then do not thou infest this my realm with thoughts that whet to bloodshed; ruining young minds, and maddening them with intoxication not of wine. Nor by causing hearts to boil like those of fighting cocks, set up amongst my citizens a war of kindred, inciting them to rash deeds against each other. Let there be foreign war; that comes easily enough; wherein the dreadful lust of glory may have scope. But I abominate the fighting of the domestic fowl. Such boons are offered thee, and they are mine to give; that bestowing and receiving benefits, and highly honoured, thou mayst have thy share of rights in this country that is beloved of Gods.

CHOR. Alas! that I should be thus wronged! that I, deep-thoughted aged one, should dwell beneath the ground (ah me!) a dishonoured object of abhorrence! I pant with vehement wrath, with utter rage. O woe, woe, woe! What pang is this that pierces deep within me? Listen to my angry heart, O mother Night! From mine ancient honours the baffling wiles of the high Gods have uprooted me, setting me at naught.

ATH. I will not be weary of recounting good things to thee, lest thou shouldst hereafter say that thine ancient Deity had been allowed by me thy junior, and by the mortal inhabitants of a great city, to pass away rejected from this Athenian plain. That will not be, if thou at all reverest holy Persuasion, or the winsome influence of my soothing tongue. In that case thou

wilt remain, but if thou choosest not to stay, at least thou wilt not in fairness bring down upon this state any sudden wrath or lingering grudge, or any affliction of the people, since it is offered thee to be a sharer with full rights in the occupation of this land, retaining all thine honours.

CHOR. Lady Athena, what seat is that thou sayest I shall occupy?

ATH. One free from all annoyance, if thou wilt but take it.

CHOR. Suppose it taken, what is the honour I am to retain?

ATH. No household shall prosper without thee.

CHOR. Wilt thou bring it about that I should have such power?

ATH. Yea, for I will secure happiness to thy true worshippers.

CHOR. Wilt thou guarantee this to me for all time?

ATH. Yea, and I need not promise what I will not perform.

CHOR. Methinks I begin to soften. My anger departs.

ATH. Then thou wilt dwell here, and make many friends?

CHOR. What blessings dost thou bid me to chant over this thy land?

ATH. Such as secure avoidance of all evil strife. And pray ye therewithal that from earth, and from the moist deep, and from the sky, blessings may come; that the breathing winds may blow with sunny

weather upon the land: that the fruits of earth and the increase of the cattle may teem unweariedly for my citizens evermore, and that the seed of mortals here may be preserved alive. But mayst thou cause to perish the issue of impious men[18]. I am like a gardener, in desiring that those my plants may flourish in righteousness, free from sorrow. Such privileges are thine to have. Meanwhile, I will not endure that anything should hinder me from honouring before the world this conquering city and state, in the contest that leads through warriors' deaths to glory.

Chor. I will accept the home which Pallas offers me, and will not scorn the city which Zeus all-powerful, and Ares, occupy as a guard-house of Gods:—the glory and delight of Greek divinities, defending their sanctuaries. For that land and people I pray, with propitious auspice, that the bright beams of the Sun-god may cause to blossom forth from the earth ever recurring blissful fortune, crowning their lives.

Ath. Thus, in my zeal for these citizens, I am planting in their midst powers stern and strong, whose office it is to dispense and guide all human things. He who hath never felt the weight of their rebuke knows not the source from whence calamity shall visit him. For the sins of former generations hale him before these for judgement, and a destruction that gives no sign shall lay him in the dust a victim to dread wrath, let him cry as loudly as he will.

Chor. Let no blight breathe upon your trees for

hurt :—Thus I declare my favour :—and let rust that kills the germ of plants never cross your boundary, nor plague of sterility approach you, and at the appointed season, let Pan [19] foster your teeming ewes, each with her two lambs, and let your soil, rich in mineral wealth, produce the Divine gifts of Hermes.

Ath. Do ye hear, O guardians of my city, what blessings she determines for you? Since mighty is the power of the dread Erinys both in Heaven and below the Earth. And for some lives of men while yet above the ground, they furnish delights and songs of joy, while others they bedim with weeping.

Chor. Moreover, I forefend untimely deaths, and I bid those who have the power, to grant your blooming maidens fortunate marriage. Confirm it, O ye Fates, (sisters of my mother [20],) whose ordinance faileth not, whose influence is felt in every home, whose righteous presence weighs on every seat of judgement ;—ye that in all respects are honoured above every God.

Ath. My heart is gladdened in me, while they so zealously retain these blessings for our land; and I look with gratitude on the countenance of Persuasion, because her eye hath guided the utterance of my tongue in addressing these dread powers, when they were savagely bent on refusal. But the might of Zeus, the God of eloquence, hath prevailed. Our joint contention for the good cause is evermore triumphant.

Chor. I pray too that civic strife, that inexhaustible source of evils, may never raise its harsh roar in this your town; nor let the dust, having drunk the dark

blood of citizens, wreak hastily upon the city retributive disaster. But may they, with thoughts of universal love, reciprocate delights; and may their hatreds be unanimous. Therein lies the remedy for many human maladies.

Ath. Have they not found their better mind, which guides their utterance on this path of blessing? From these dread countenances, I foresee great gain to these my citizens. For while with loyal hearts ye honour highly these powers that are loyal to the state, your lives will be conspicuous for justice, redounding to the glory of your land and city.

Chor. Farewell, farewell! enjoy your rich and happy destiny. Farewell, people of the fair city nestling close by Zeus; ye favourites of his favourite maiden daughter—ye who preserve wholesome thoughts that grow with time. The Father counts you sacred, while ye harbour beneath Athena's wings.

Ath. Fare ye well also! But I must go before you to point out your resting-place, attended by the sacred torches of this your escort. Proceed, and, lighted by these holy fires, descend beneath the ground; where ye shall restrain all that is baneful to our land, and send forth victorious advantage for our city. Do ye (*to Attendant Maidens*) lead the way for this company that are to dwell with you; ye children of Cranaus, dwellers in Athens. May good thoughts that lead to good be ever with my citizens!

Chor. Farewell, farewell, once more!—again I repeat it—all ye that occupy the city, mortals and

divine powers that dwell in Athena's town. Revering truly my sojourn amongst you, ye shall bless your fortunes. [*The procession forms and prayers are sung.*

ATH. I approve the tenor of the prayers which I have heard. Now by the light of flaring torches, I will escort them to their subterranean dwelling-place, with these attendants who guard mine image: and it is meet I should. A glorious band shall proceed to the very eye and centre of the whole country of Theseus—a band of children and of women, and a troop of aged dames, apparelled all in raiment of purple grain.

Forward—advance the torch-fires, that this loyal company dwelling in your land henceforth may be distinguished by the blessings which they bring.

ATTENDANT MAIDENS. Come to your home, great children of night, ever childless, jealous of your old renown. Come, loyally escorted, and let all the people be hushed. Come down to the primeval hollow place of Earth, that ye may receive supreme honours of worship and sacrifice. Let all the people be hushed!

Propitious and loyal-hearted towards our land, come hither, ye dread Goddesses, cheered upon your way with the torch that is consumed by fire.

LEADER OF THE ATTENDANT MAIDENS. Shout auspiciously, in echo to the song! Be ever merciful to the citizens of Pallas, as they pour libations to you. On this condition all-seeing Zeus and Destiny have brought you home.

Now shout auspiciously, in echo to the song!

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NOTES

NOTES TO THE AGAMEMNON

[1] Line 2. It has been usual of late to construe *μῆκος* with *αἰτῶ* in line 1: 'I have been entreating the Gods during the length of my twelve months' watch.' But although the construction is harsh, the sense is more natural as given in the translation, making *μῆκος* an accusative in loose construction with the preceding words: *i.e.* 'I speak with reference to,' etc.

[2] 36. The explanation of the rustic saying *βοῦς ἐπὶ γλώσσῃ* is still doubtful, but the general notion of a crushing weight seems better than the allusion to a bribe, although the latter has received fresh plausibility from recent investigations respecting the origin of money.

[3] 49. The *αἰγυπιὸς* is said to be a species of vulture, but the word 'vulture' in English, as associated with the carrion vulture, is best avoided here. In what follows I take *ἐκπατίοις* to mean 'diverting from the direct pathway.' The birds are imagined to be making a 'bee-line' for home, but when they see that their nest has been rifled, grief makes them swerve and tower in circles over it.

[4] 70. The Scholiast explains *ἀπύρων ἱερῶν* as an allusion to the Fates or Furies—whose worship, however, was not without burnt sacrifice (*Eum.* 108). Either (1) the act of the Erinys in withering her victim is imagined as a sacrifice without fire (*Eum.* 301), or (2) the sacrifice without fire simply means neglect of religious duties (*Odyss.* iv. 352; Pindar, *Ol.* vii. 88). The *sullen* sacrifice that will not burn (Soph. *Ant.* 1006) is not to be thought of here.

[5] 95. The incense is 'without guile' because it could only be brought forth by royal authority, and this would not be done without authentic intelligence—so that it cannot deceive.

[6] 144. Reading *αἰνεῖ* for *αἰτεῖ*.

[7] Line 196. *τρίβῳ.* The Scholiast explains this word as equal to *διατριβῇ*, 'delay'; but it seems better to give it its proper sense of 'rubbing' or 'wear,' for which see below, line 391.

[8] 224. *πρωτοπήμων* has commonly been taken to refer to the primal disaster or crime, which is regarded as the source of all the rest (like *πρώταρχον ἄτην*, below, line 1192). I prefer to explain it of the effect produced by unlooked-for suffering upon a nature hitherto unexercised in adversity, developing unforeseen possibilities of crime.

[9] 246. Reading *παιᾶνα* instead of *αἰῶνα* with Hartung.

[10] 252. Reading with the old editions *μαθεῖν ἐπιῤῥέπει τὸ μέλλον. τὸ δὲ προκλύειν*, κ.τ.λ., and inserting *εἰ* before *κλύοις* (*ἐπεὶ γένοιτ' ἄν*, [*εἰ*] *κλύοις*).

[11] 345. Literally 'to turn along the other limb of the double race-course,' *i.e.* from the goal back to the starting-point, after reaching the goal.

[12] 409. *δόμων προφῆται*]. Cp. *inf.* 1099, *Cho.* 33, 38. Not merely 'those qualified to interpret the arcana of the house,' but apparently a class of persons not heard of elsewhere, employed to advise the family at critical moments, as supposed to be gifted with superhuman insight.

[13] 413. I suggest *ἄλαστα πημονῶν ἰδών.*

[14] 469. Some such reading as *βάλλεται δ' ὀρόγκοις* (Ahrens-Wecklein) seems required for *βάλλεται γὰρ ὄσσοις.*

[15] 495. 'Dry dust.' The dust rising from the thirsty plain of Argolis as the herald and his companions approach, shows that his is a real bodily presence and not a 'bodiless' messenger, as the beacon was.

[16] 513. The *ἀγώνιοι θεοὶ* here and in the *Supplices* appear to be the Gods who were collectively worshipped in Argolis as publicly presiding over the State—perhaps the twelve greatest Gods; cp. *κοινοβωμία*, and the Epic *θεῶν ἐν ἀγῶνι, θεῖον δύσονται ἀγῶνα.* Ἀγών in this connection retains some trace of what was probably its original meaning, 'a place of leading,' *i.e.* a public thoroughfare.

[17] 534. Paris was *a thief* when he stole away Helen and the treasure with her. He was convicted of *robbery* when he refused to restore them.

[18] 547. The words *στύγος στρατῷ* are questionable. But they may possibly mean 'to the dislike of the army'—whose desire was that those at home might be doing well.

[19] Line 550. This supposes a trajection of *νῦν*. Paley and Wecklein would render, 'So that now (on the king's return), like you, I could welcome death.'

[20] 556-7. I take *οὐ λαχόντες* to explain *στένοντες*—'What was there for which we did not groan, as not having obtained our daily portion of it?'

[21] 612. *ἢ χαλκοῦ βαφάς.* I take these much disputed words to mean (not '*the thing that is not*' but) '*the thing that I know not.*' A delicately nurtured princess could not be expected to have learned the mysteries of smith-craft, of which the 'dipping' or tempering of metal was the chief secret.

[22] 616. *τοροῖσιν ἑρμηνεῦσιν.* Weil explains this to mean *verbis quae animi sensus clarissime interpretantur.* I understand it of the herald's *ears* (construing the dative as instrumental with *μανθάνοντι*). In either case there is a somewhat forced personification, but hardly more so than where a slipper is called *πρόδουλον ἔμβασιν ποδός* (*inf.* 945).

[23] 636. *χωρὶς ἡ τιμὴ θεῶν.* 'The honouring of Gods is to be kept apart'—not from other modes of honouring them (Paley), *but* from honour paid to the Erinyes, who here, as in the *Eumenides*, are contradistinguished from the 'Gods,' *i.e.* the Olympian dynasty. Cf. *inf.* 645, *παιᾶνα τόνδ' Ἐρινύων.*

[24] 687. The name *Helenè* is associated by the poet with *ἑλεῖν*, 'to take' or 'destroy.'

[25] 766. Reading *ὅτε τὸ κύριον μόλῃ | φάος τόκου*—the brilliant conjecture of H. L. Ahrens. Observe that *νεαρὰ* in the MS. reading may have come from *ἡμέρα*, a gloss on *φάος*.

[26] 817. Reading *χειρὸς οὐ πληρουμένᾳ* with the MSS. *χειρός* is 'genitive of the agent.'

[27] 864-5. She says this with a malignant side-glance at Cassandra.

[28] 930. Reading *πράσσοιμεν.*

[29] 931-934. These lines have been very variously rendered. I understand the connection to be: *Clyt.* 'Tell *me*, your wife, one thing, and tell it frankly' (*ἐμοὶ* is emphatic because she claims that he should answer *her* truly without respect to what others may think). *Agam.* 'I am not to be cajoled, nor over-awed.' *Clyt.* 'This, which you refuse to my request, you might be doing in fulfilment of a vow, might you not?' *Agam.* 'Certainly I might—I know that rash vows are made in moments of danger.'

I read *ἐξεῖπον* with the MSS. in l. 934. *τέλος* is in any case obscure, and possibly corrupt.

[30] Line 976. Reading δεῖγμα with the MSS.

[31] 986-8. Retaining παρήβησε and reading ψαμμίας ἀκτάς, I make ναυβάτας στρατός the subject of both verbs, and suppose an allusion to the detention at Aulis (*supr.* 188). The phrase ὑπ' Ἴλιον ὦρτο has then a 'pregnant' force: 'set out (to go) beneath the walls of Troy.'

[32] 1081. She associates Ἀπόλλων with ἀπολλύναι, 'to ruin.'

[33] 1092. Reading παιδιορραντηρίον with Dr. Verrall.

[34] 1116. ἀλλ' ἄρκυς ἡ ξύνευνος. Cassandra in her 'second sight' has first a general vision of an assault (1110 ff.), then more distinctly she perceives, first the web in which the king is entangled (1116), and presently the weapon with which he is slain (1127).

[35] 1121. 'The pale death-drop.' In one who is bleeding to death it is imagined that the remaining blood, having lost its hue, returns to the heart at the last moment. This is used as an image of mortal faintness.

[36] 1137. I read ἐπεγχέαι for ἐπεγχέασα of the MSS.

[37] 1173. The difficulty about this line disappears if ἐμβαλῶ (by tmesis) is taken as one word.

[38] 1235. Aeschylus seems to identify the Scylla that dwells among the rocks with the hard-hearted daughter of Nisus; cp. *Cho.* 614 f., Virg. *Ecl.* vi. 74.

[39] 1266. She first breaks the wand (σὲ μέν), then proceeds to tear off the fillets, etc. In what follows I read ἐγὼ δ' ἄμ' ἕψομαι with Hermann.

[40] 1270-1272. I read ἐπώπτευσας. There is some doubt whether Cassandra is thinking of the time of her capture at Troy or of her reception at Argos. If the former, some change is required, *e.g.* καταγελωμένην μέγα φίλων θ' ὑπ' ἐχθρῶν τ' οὐ διχορρόπως, μάτην :— 'Deeply insulted, by friends alike and enemies' (since both despised my prophetic gift), 'all idly' (since their disbelief made my sufferings vain). I have tried to get a meaning out of the words as they stand in the MSS. from καταγελωμένην to μάτην. μετὰ φίλων means then 'I and Agamemnon are both scorned,' οὐ διχορρόπως 'his foes are mine as well,' μάτην (as before) implies 'my sufferings are vain, because my prophecy is disbelieved.' But the following lines must then refer to some imaginary slight, for nothing that has passed on the stage bears them out exactly.

[41] Line 1278. I take πρόσφαγμα in this and other passages to be a way of writing πρόσ-σφαγμα, 'an additional sacrifice,' 'a victim slain over the dead.'

[42] 1300. ὁ ὕστατος, sc. χρόνος.

[43] 1343. 'Within here'=ἔσω. In crying out for rescue, the wounded man naturally indicates the place whither rescue should come. This interpretation occurred independently to myself (*American Journal of Philology*, i. 4) and to the late Mr. H. A. J. Munro, the editor of Lucretius (*Cambridge Journal of Philology*).

[44] 1359. 'That which is in act'=τοῦ δρῶντος. This use of the active participle neuter occurs in Sophocles and Thucydides. See my edition of Sophocles, *Oed. Col.* l. 1604.

[45] 1468-9. 'The twofold race.' This phrase recalls the pairs of brothers,—the rivalry of Atreus and Thyestes, the conjoint sovereignty of Agamemnon and Menelaus.

[46] 1521-2. These lines have been much questioned, but (merely reading οὐδ' for οὔτ') I do not see why Clytemnestra should not speak them. She regards the death of Agamemnon as the deliberate judicial act of a freeborn woman,—therefore not ἀνελεύθερον. The lines which follow are meant to show that it was not the death of a slave, but the result of a fair conflict of opposing claims.

[47] 1536. Those who object to the double personification may read Δίκη . . . θηγάναις μάχαιραν with Musgrave.

[48] 1568. δαίμονι τῷ Πλεισθενιδᾶν. Cp. *infr.* 1602, τὸ Πλεισθένους γένος. The place of Pleisthenes in the genealogy is doubtful. Aeschylus seems to imagine him as in some way coming in between Pelops and Atreus. Possibly some legend may have tried to soften the horror of the Thyestean banquet by making Atreus son of Pleisthenes and Thyestes' brother only by adoption.

[49] 1596. I take αὐτῶν as the genitive after the privative adjective: 'without the tokens of them,' namely of the hands and feet, which would have betrayed the nature of the meat.

[50] 1657. 'Your appointed places.' I read νομοὺς for δόμους. Νομός='haunt,' 'habitat.' Others read δρόμους, 'courses.'

[51] 1660. 'With the malignity of heaven.' Lit. 'With the heavy heel of a deity.' Compare the image in Sophocles, *Oed. Tyr.* 1300 f.: τίς ὁ πηδήσας | μείζονα δαίμων τῶν μακίστων | πρὸς σῇ δυσδαίμονι μοίρᾳ.

NOTES TO THE CHOËPHOROE.

[1] Line 1. The other meaning of this place ('Hermes, who in the watchfulness fulfilled an office conferred on thee by thy sire'), which Aristophanes (*Ran.* 1144) makes Dionysus uphold, is defended by many excellent scholars. But other allusions to Hermes throughout the play suggest that an image of the God was represented as standing near the grave. This would give significance to the words as I have rendered them. And this meaning is confirmed by the use of *ἐποπτεύω* elsewhere in the *Choëphoroe*, e.g. 489.

[2] 52. Not 'hated by mortals.'

[3] 58. *τις* here refers to Clytemnestra and Aegisthus.

[4] 137. Agamemnon is still in evil case while he remains unavenged; and *πόνοι=κακά.* See Soph. *Aj.* 1151, *ib.* 1007. Others take *ἐν . . . πόνοισι* to mean 'in the wealth which thy labour won.'

[5] 152. *δάκρυ καναχὲς* is taken to mean the 'plashing' or 'pattering' tear. I prefer to understand by the 'sounding tear' the tear that is accompanied with sounds of mourning.

[6] 154. Or 'where access both to good and evil things is denied.' But the Trojan women may well regard the race of the Pelopidae as mixed of good and evil persons.

[7] 285. There is a suspicion of a lacuna here. I take the words as neuter in apposition with *προσβολὰς Ἐρινύων=κακά.*

[8] 319. In early philosophy, the realms of light and darkness were imagined as co-extensive and conterminous.

[9] 330. Reading *τἀκέντων* with Grotefend—doubtfully.

[10] 334. Or 'the newly mingled bowl of libation,' if *φιάλην νεοκρᾶτα* (Wecklein) is read.

[11] Conington renders 'the children have the advantage.

[12] 439. The mutilation of the dead man was supposed to make his avenger helpless.

[13] 447. Reading *μυχοῦ* with the MSS. Otherwise, *μυχῷ*, 'in close confinement.'

[14] 482. Some words are lost, and the sense is incomplete. Wecklein suggests *τυχεῖν με γαμβροῦ*, 'that I may win a bridegroom'!

[15] 578. Wecklein, referring to *infra* 1063 f., understands the three 'blood-draughts' to be—(1) the Thyestean banquet, (2) the death of Agamemnon, (3) the death of Aegisthus. I prefer to take *τρίτην πόσιν* as a silent reference to Clytemnestra. Her death is

the third or crowning libation to the Erinys, whose first draught was the murder of Agamemnon in revenge for Iphigeneia. The banquet is not spoken of in the trilogy as the work of Erinys. I read l. 574 *ἅπαξ ἐπιστῇ καὶ κατ' ὀφθαλμοὺς φανῇ*.

[16] Line 583. *i.e.* Hermes. (See above, Note [1].)

[17] 623 ff. The long parenthesis seems the best expedient for unravelling this difficult place. See Conington's note in his edition. The transposition of strophe and antistrophe, adopted by other editors, is too violent a remedy.

[18] 699. I read *παροῦσαν ἐκγράφεις*, 'you cancel it when actually here.' Orestes is coming, *i.e.* his bones are on their way; yet the hope that attended his return is done away with.

[19] 751. Interpreters take this of the infant's 'crying in the night.' I have ventured to turn it otherwise in my verse rendering. There is something picturesque and Aeschylean in recalling the impatient shout of the heroic (or demonic) woman in her travail.

[20] 785. Reading *εὐδίους κυρίως* with Wecklein.

[21] 795. *i.e.* To his course of misery.

[22] 796. I take *σῳζόμενον* passive, and *ὄρεγμα* in apposition with *ῥυθμόν*:—*σῳζόμενον ῥυθμὸν* = 'keeping time' seems trivial and poor.

[23] 806. Delphian Apollo. See *Agam.* 509, 510.

[24] 816. The text is doubtful here. I follow Wecklein.

[25] 822. The Chorus are bound to lament the dead, even while condemning them: *infra* 931.

[26] 846. I follow Wecklein, who takes *θνήσκοντες* as opposed to *βλέποντα supra*. This repetition of the same word in a different meaning is quite consonant with Greek idiom.

[27] 860. Or, reading *πεῖραι* with a different accent, 'the trial of the sword, etc., shall reveal.'

[28] 883. Reading *ἐπιξήνου* for *ἐπὶ ξυροῦ* with Wecklein.

[29] 945. *i.e.* Hermes.

[30] 957. Reading (doubtfully) with Wecklein *κρατεῖται δὲ πῶς τὸ μῆδος θεῶν*.

[31] 998. Reading (again doubtfully) *νεβροῦ* with Wecklein.

[32] 1014. I see no reason for giving an unusual sense to *αἰνῶ* here.

[33] 1041. The text is defective here, but the syllables *μενελε* seem to indicate some reference to Menelaus. See Introduction.

[34] 1067. *γονίας*, if genuine, may have some such meaning as 'inborn in the race,' suggested by Blomfield, but the order of the words rather implies that it is used predicatively (cp. *ἄξας ὀξύς* in Soph. *Aj.* 258), and I believe that it means 'genuine,' *i.e.* 'powerful.'

NOTES TO THE EUMENIDES.

[1] Line 3. Themis is here Earth's daughter, as in Hesiod. In the *Prometheus* (l. 210) she is identified with Earth.

[2] 103. Reading *καρδίᾳ σέθεν* with the MSS. and Wecklein.

[3] 119. Reading *φίλοι γάρ εἰσιν οὐκ ἐμοῖς προσεικότες* with Wecklein.

[4] 164. I take the accusative *φονολιβῆ θρόμβον* in a loose construction with what follows.

[5] 178. Reading *ἐκ κείνου* for *ἐκείνου*.

[6] 220. Reading *τίνεσθαι*, with Meineke. But *γενέσθαι* perhaps admits of a possible meaning,—'so that you' (the Erinys) 'never arise' or 'exist effectively.'

[7] 371. *σφαλερὰ . . . κῶλα* is an accusative (of apposition) in the same construction with *ἅταν*, equivalent to *σφαλερὰν . . . βάσιν* or the like.

[8] 388. 'For clear-sighted men and blind.' This, like *ἀλαοῖσι καὶ δεδορκόσιν*, *supra* 323, has been explained to mean 'the living and the dead.' But is not **δυσομμάτοις** rather a forced expression for this?

[9] 393. Reading *ἔτι μοι μένει* with Hermann.

[10] 413. Or, reading with Wecklein, *ἄμορφον ὄντα τὸν πέλας*, 'one's neighbour who is lacking in beauty.'

[11] 506-8. So I prefer to take these words, which are variously explained. Wecklein would render them as follows:—'One here, one there, reporting a neighbour's woes, shall inquire (?) how to end or alleviate his trouble. And his hapless informant shall vainly recommend uncertain remedies.'

[12] 553. The text of this passage is still uncertain. Wecklein adopts Meineke's conjecture *βαρίβαν* ('mariner') for *περαιβάδαν* of the MSS. But although the imagery is thus made more distinct, and a clear meaning is given to *ἄγοντα* ('carrying goods on board'), the metaphor is introduced too suddenly.

[13] 563. Wecklein quotes Eur. *fr.* 232 *οὐ γὰρ ὑπερθεῖν* **κύματος** *ἄκραν δυνάμεσθ' ἔτι γὰρ θάλλει πενία, κακὸν ἔχθιστον, φεύγει δ' ὄλβος*. This is quoted also by L. and S., but does not support their rendering.

[14] 735. On Athena's vote see Introduction, p. xxxiii.

[15] 751. The correction of *βαλοῦσα* to *παροῦσα*, which has

occurred independently to several critics, appears to have been first thought of by H. Voss.

[16] Line 782. Wecklein, following Abretsch, notes an hiatus here.

[17] 825. The text is uncertain: *δύσκηλον* has been explained as made by false analogy from *εὔκηλον* (*Fέκηλον*), and has again been rejected as a *vox nihili*. But may it not be a legitimate derivative from the root of *σκέλλω*, *σκληρός*, etc.? Wecklein reads *δύσκημον χόλον*, 'wrath hard to muzzle,'—which certainly agrees better with *στήσητε*.

[18] 910. Wecklein follows Weil in reading *ἔκφορος σπορὰ πέλοι*.

[19] 944. Adopting (with Wecklein) Meineke's correction *εὐθενοῦντα Πᾶν* for *εὐθενοῦντ' ἄγαν*.

[20] 962. Wecklein, with K. O. Müller and others, following Hesiod's *Theogony* (l. 217) interprets *ματροκασιγνῆται*, 'sisters by our mother's side' (because the children of Night in Hesiod have no father). But Aeschylus (see on l. 3) does not *consistently* adopt any version of mythology. And why should not the Fates, like Themis, be daughters of Earth? They are certainly older than the Furies, at whose birth they presided (ll. 339, 349), and are called 'primeval' (l. 728), and 'of ancient birth' (l. 172), by the Erinyes themselves. The natural meaning, 'sisters of our mother,' is ridiculed by K. O. Müller, apparently for no better reason than that some ludicrous associations have gathered about the German words '*Die Tanten*.'

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